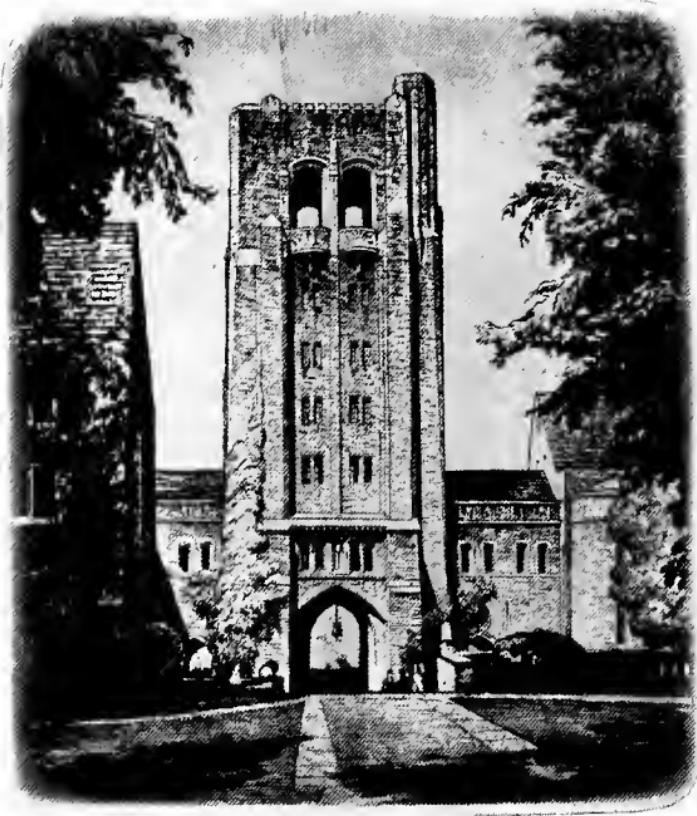




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Vol. 2.

Titmouse on the Hustings.

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T E N
T H O U S A N D A - Y E A R

BY

SAMUEL WARREN

D.C.L., F.R.S.

A NEW EDITION, CAREFULLY REVISED, WITH NOTES
AND ILLUSTRATIONS

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II.

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
EDINBURGH AND LONDON
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C. H. MELBY

S. J. L.

A. L.

TEN THOUSAND A-YEAR.

BOOK THE FIFTH.

CHAPTER I.

MESSRS YAHOO AND FITZ-SNOOKS *v.* TITMOUSE ; AND GAMMON *v.* THEM ALL.

We must now return to Yatton, where matters had occurred, not unworthy of being recorded. Though Mr Yahoo paid anxious court to Mr Gammon, who was far too much for him in every way, 'twas plain that he dreaded and disliked, as much as he was despised by, that gentleman. Mr Gammon had easily extracted from Titmouse evidence that Yahoo was endeavouring, from time to time, artfully to set him against his protector, the aforesaid Mr Gammon. This was *something*; but more than this—Yahoo, a reckless, rollicking villain, was obtaining a growing ascendancy over Titmouse, whom he was rapidly initiating into all kinds of vile habits and practices; and, in short, completely corrupting him. But, above all, Gammon ascertained that Yahoo had already commenced, with great success, his experiments upon the purse of Titmouse. Before they had been a week at Yatton, down came a splendid billiard-table with its appendages from London, accompanied by a man to fix it—as he did—in the library, which he quickly denuded of all traces of its former character; and here Yahoo,

Titmouse, and Fitz-Snooks would pass a great deal of their time. Then they would have tables and chairs, with cards, cigars, and brandy-and-water, placed upon the beautiful "soft, smooth-shaven lawn," and sit there playing *ecarte*, at once pleasantly soothed and stimulated, for half a day together. Then Yahoo got up frequent excursions to Grilston, and even to York; where, together with his two companions, he had "great sport," as the newspapers began to intimate with growing frequency and distinctness. Actuated by that execrable licentiousness with reference to the female sex, by which he was peculiarly distinguished, and of which he boasted, he had got into several curious adventures with farmers' girls, and others in the vicinity of Yatton, and even amongst the female members of the establishment at the Hall; in which latter quarter Fitz-Snooks and Titmouse began to imitate his example. Mr Gammon had, for these and other reasons, conceived a horrid loathing and disgust for the miscreant leader into these enormities; and, but for certain consequences, would

have despatched him with as much indifference as he would have laid arsenic in the way of a bold voracious rat, or killed a snake. As it was, he secretly caused the Yahoo to experience, on one or two occasions, the effects of his goodwill. Yahoo had offered certain atrocious indignities to the sweetheart of a strapping young farmer; whose furious complaints coming to Mr Gammon's ears, that gentleman, under a pledge of secrecy, gave him two guineas to be on the look-out for Yahoo, and give him the best taste he could of a pair of huge Yorkshire fists. A day or two afterwards, the Satyr fell in with his unsuspected enemy. Yahoo was a strongly-built man, and an excellent bruiser; but was at first disposed to shirk the fight, on glancing at the prodigious proportions of Hazel, and the fury flaming in his eyes. The instant, however, that he saw the fighting attitude into which poor Hazel had thrown himself, Yahoo smiled, stript and set to. I am sorry to say that it was a good while before Hazel could get a blow at his accomplished opponent; whom, however, he at length began to wear out. Then he gave the Yahoo a miserable pommeling, to be sure; and finished by knocking out five of his front teeth, viz. three in the upper, and two in the under jaw—beautifully white and regular they certainly had been; and the loss of them caused him inconceivable affliction on the score of his appearance, and also, not a little interfered with the process of cigar-smoking. It would, besides, have debarred him, had he been so disposed, from enlisting as a soldier, inasmuch as he could not bite off the end of his cartridge: wherefore, it would seem, that Hazel had committed the offence of *Mayhem*.* Mr Gammon condoled heartily with Mr Yahoo, on hearing of the brutal attack which had been made upon him; and as the assault had not been committed in the presence of a witness,† strongly recommended him to bring an action of trespass *vi et armis* against Hazel, which Gammon undertook to conduct

to—a nonsuit. While they were conversing in this friendly way together, it suddenly occurred to Gammon that there was another service which he could render to Mr Yahoo, and with equally strict observance of the injunction, *not to let his left hand know what his right hand did*; for he loved the character of a secret benefactor. So he wrote a letter to Snap, whom he knew to have been once treated insolently by Yahoo, desiring him to go to two or three Jew bill-brokers and money-lenders, and ascertain whether they had any paper by them with the name of "Yahoo" upon it:—and in the event of such being discovered, he was to act in the manner pointed out by Gammon. Off went Snap like a shot, on receiving this letter; and the first gentleman he applied to, viz. a Mr Suck'em Dry, proved to be possessed of an acceptance of Yahoo's for £200, for which Dry had given only twenty-five pounds on speculation. He readily yielded to Snap's offer, to give him a shy at Mr Yahoo *gratis*—and put the document into the hands of Snap; who forthwith delivered it, confidentially, to Swindle Shark, gent., one &c., a little Jew Attorney in Chancery Lans, into whose offices (with a due understanding as to the division of profits) the dirtier work of Quirk, Gammon, and Snap was swept—in cases where they did not choose to appear. I wish the mutilated Yahoo could have seen the mouthful of glittering teeth that were displayed by the hungry Jew, on receiving the above commission. His duties, though of a painful, were of a brief and simple description. 'Twas a plain case of *Indorsee v. Acceptor*. The affidavit of debt was sworn the same afternoon; and within an hour's time afterwards, a thin slip of paper was delivered into the hands of the Under-Sheriff of Yorkshire, commanding him to take the body‡ of Pimp Yahoo, if he should be found in his bailiwick, and him safely keep—out of harm's way—to enable him to pay £200 *debt* to Suck'em Dry, and £24, 6s. 10d. *costs* to Swindle Shark. Down went this

* See APPENDIX.

† Ibid.

‡ See APPENDIX.

little "infernal machine" to Yorkshire by that night's post.

Nothing could exceed the astonishment and concern with which Mr Gammon, the evening but one afterwards, on returning to the Hall from a ride to Grilsten, heard Titmouse and Fitz-Snooks—deserted beings!—tell how, an hour before, two big vulgar fellows, one of them with a slip of paper in his hand, had called at the Hall, asked for the innocent unsuspecting Yahoo, just as he had made an admirable *coup*—and insisted on his forthwith accompanying them to the house of one of the aforesaid bailiffs, and then on to York Castle. They had brought a tax-cart with them for his convenience; and into it, between his two new friends, was forced to get the astounded Yahoo—smoking, as well as he could, a cigar, with some score or two of which he had filled all his pockets, and swearing oaths enough to have lasted the whole neighbourhood for a fortnight at least. Mr Gammon was shocked at the indignity which had been perpetrated, and asked why the villains had not been kept till he could have been sent for. Then, leaving the melancholy Titmouse and Fitz-Snooks to themselves for a little while, he took a solitary walk in the elm avenue, where—grief has different modes of expressing itself—he relieved his excited feelings by reiterated little bursts of gentle laughter. As soon as the *York True Blue* had, amongst other intimations of fashionable movements, informed the public that "*The Hon. Pimp Yahoo*" had quitted Yatton Hall for York Castle, where he intended to remain and receive a large party of friends—it was gratifying to see how soon, and in what force, they began to muster and rally round him. "*Detainers*"—se that species of visiting cards is called—came fluttering in like snow; and in short there was no end of the messages of civility and congratulation which he received from those whom, in the season of his prosperity, he had obliged with his valuable countenance, and custom.

Ah me, poor Yahoo, completely

done! Oft is it, in this infernal world of ours, that the best concerted schemes are thus suddenly defeated by the envious and capricious fates! Thus were thy arms suddenly held back from behind, just as they were encircling as pretty, plump a pigeon as ever nestled in them with pert and playful confidence, to be plucked! Alas, alas! And didst thou behold the danger to which it was exposed, as it fluttered upward unconsciously into the region where thine affectionate eye detected the keen hawk in deadly poise? Ah me! Oh dear! What shall I do? What can I say? How vent my grief for the Prematurely Caged?

Poor Titmouse was very dull for some little time after the sudden abduction of this bold and brilliant spirit, and spoke of bringing an action, at the suggestion of Fitz-Snooks, against the miscreant who had dared to set the law in motion at Yatton, under the very nose of its lord and master. As soon, however, as Gammon intimated to him that all those who had lent Yahee money, might now rely upon that gentleman's honour, and whistle back their cash at their leisure, Titmouse burst into a great rage; telling Gammon that he, Titmouse, had only a day or two before lent Yahoo £150; and that he was a "cursed scamp," who had known, when he borrowed, that he could not repay; and a Detainer, at the suit of "Titlebat Titmouse, Esq., was one of the earliest that found its way into the Sheriff's office; this new creditor becoming one of the bitterest and most relentless against the fallen Yahoo, except, perhaps, Mr Fitz-Snooks. That gentleman having lent the amiable Yahoo no less a sum than thirteen hundred pounds, remained easy all the while, under the impression that certain precious documents called "I.O.U.'s" of the aforesaid Yahoo were, as he had always assured him, as good as cash. He was horribly dismayed on discovering that it was slightly otherwise; that he was not to be paid before all other creditors, and immediately; so he also sent a special message in the shape of a

Detainer, backed by a great number of curses.

In process of time Mr Yahoo be-thought himself of getting "white-washed;" but when he came to be inspected, it was considered that he was not properly seasoned; so the operation was delayed for two years, under an arbitrary statute, which enacted, "that if it should appear that the said prisoner had contracted any of his debts fraudulently, or by means of false pretences, or without having had any reasonable or probable expectation, at the time when contracted, of paying the same," &c. &c. &c., "or should be indebted for damages recovered in any action for criminal conversation, or seduction, or for malicious injuries, &c. &c., such prisoner should be discharged as to such debts and damages, so soon only as he should have been in custody at the suit of such creditors for a period or periods not exceeding two years." Such is the odious restraint upon the liberty of the subject, which, at this day, in the nineteenth century, is suffered to disgrace the statute law of England; for, in order to put other Yahoos upon their guard against the cruel and iniquitous designs upon them, I here inform them that the laws under which Mr Yahoo suffered his two years' incarceration (every one of his debts, &c., coming under one or other of the descriptions above-mentioned), are, *proh pudor!* re-enacted and at this moment in force, and in augmented stringency, as several respectable gentlemen, if you could only get access to them, would tell you.

Yahoo having been thus adroitly disposed of, Mr Gammon had the gratification of finding that mischievous simpleton, Fitz-Snooks, very soon afterwards take his departure. He pined for the pleasures of town, which he had money enough, with economy, to enjoy for about three years longer; after which he might go abroad, or to the *dogs*—wherever they were to be found. 'Twas indeed monstrously dull at Yatton; the game which Yahoo had given him a taste for was so

strictly preserved there! and the birds so uncommon shy and wild, and strong on the wing! Besides, Gammon's presence was a terrible pressure upon him; overawing and benumbing him, in spite of several attempts which he had made, when charged with the requisite quantity of wine, to exhibit an impudent familiarity, or even defiance.

As soon as poor Titmouse had bade Fitz-Snooks good-by, shaken hands with him, and lost sight of him—Titmouse was at Yatton, alone with Gammon, and felt as if a spell were upon him.—He was completely cowed and prostrate. Yet Gammon laid himself out to the uttermost to please him, and re-assure his drooping spirits. He had got into his head, that the mysterious and dreadful Gammon had, in some deep way or other, been at the bottom of Yahoo's abduction, and of the disappearance of Fitz-Snooks, and would, by-and-by, do as much for him! He had no feeling of ownership of Yatton; but of being, as it were, only tenant-at-will thereof to Mr Gammon!—Whenever he tried to re-assure himself, by repeating that it did not signify—for Yatton was his own—and he might do as he liked; his feelings might be compared to a balloon, which, with the eyes of eager and anxious thousands upon it, yet cannot get inflated sufficiently to rise an inch from the ground. How was it? Mr Gammon's manner towards him was uncommonly respectful; what else could he wish for? Yet he would have given a thousand pounds to that gentleman to take himself off, and never show his calm but intolerable face again at Yatton! It annoyed him, too, more than he could express, to perceive the deference and respect which every one at the Hall manifested towards Mr Gammon. Titmouse would sometimes stamp his foot, when alone, with childish fury on the ground, when he thought of it. When at dinner, and sitting together afterwards, Gammon would rack his invention for jokes and anecdotes to amuse Titmouse—who would certainly give a kind of laugh; exclaim, "Brav! Ha,

ha! 'Pon my life!—capital!—By Jove! Most uncommon good! you don't say so?" but it was only the ghost of a laugh; and he would go on, drinking glass after glass of wine, or brandy-and-water, and smoking cigar after cigar, till he felt fuddled and sick, in which condition he would retire to bed, and leave Gammon, clear and serene in head and temper, to his meditations. When, at length, he broached the subject of their bill—a frightful amount it was; of the monies advanced by Mr Quirk, for his support for eight or nine months on a liberal scale, and which mounted up to a sum infinitely larger than could have been supposed; and lastly, of the bond for ten thousand pounds, as the just reward to the firm for their long-continued, anxious, and successful exertions on their client's behalf—Titmouse mustered up all his resolution, as for a last desperate struggle; swore they were robbing him; and added, with a furious snap of the fingers, "they had better take the estate themselves—allow him a pound a-week, and send him back to Tagrag's." Then he burst into tears, and cried like a child, long and bitterly.

"Well, sir," said Gammon, after remaining silent for some time, looking at Titmouse calmly, but with an expression of face which frightened him out of his wits, "if this is to be really the way in which I am to be treated by you—I, the only real disinterested friend you have in the world, as you have had hundreds of opportunities of ascertaining, if my advice is to be spurned, and my motives are to be suspected; if your first and deliberate engagements to our firm are to be wantonly broken"—

"Ah, but, 'pon my soul, I was humbugged into making them," said Titmouse, passionately.

"Why, you little miscreant!" exclaimed Gammon, starting up in his chair, and gazing at him as if he would have scorched him with his eye, "Do you DARE to say so? If you have no gratitude—have you lost your memory? What were you when I dug you out of your filthy hole at Closet Court? Did you not repeatedly go

down on your knees to us? Did you not promise, a thousand times, to do infinitely more than you are now called upon to do? And is this, you insolent—despicable little insect!—is this the return you make us for putting you, a beggar—and very nearly too, an idiot!"—

"You're most uncommon polite," said Titmouse, suddenly and bitterly.

"Silence, sir! I am in no humour for trifling!" interrupted Gammon sternly. "I say, is this the return you think of making us—not only to insult us, but refuse to pay money actually advanced by us to save you from starvation—money, and days and nights, and weeks and months, and many months of intense anxiety, expended in discovering how to put you in possession of a splendid fortune?—Poh! you miserable little trifler!—why should I trouble myself thus? Remember—remember, Tittlebat Titmouse," continued Gammon in a low tone, and extending towards him threateningly his thin forefinger, "I who made you will, unless you behave yourself, in one day—one single day—unmake you—will blow you away like a bit of froth; you shall never be seen, or heard of, or thought of, except by some small draper whose unhappy shopman you may be!"

"Ah!—'pon my life! Daresay you think I'm most uncommon frightened! Ah, ha! Monstrous—particular good!" said Titmouse desperately.

Gammon perceived that he trembled in every limb; and the smile which he tried to throw into his face was so wretched, that, had you seen him at that moment, and considered his position, much and justly as you now despise him, you must have pitied him. "You're always, now, going on in this way!—It's all so likely!" continued he. "Why, 'pon my soul, am not I to be a LORD one of these days? Can you help that? Can you send a lord behind a draper's counter? 'Pon my soul, what do you say to that? I like that, uncommon!"

"What do I say?" replied Gammon calmly, "why, that I've a great mind to say and do something that would

make you—would dispose you to—jump head foremost into the first sewer you came near!"

Titmouse's heart was lying fluttering at his throat.

"Titmouse! Titmouse!" continued Gammon, dropping his voice, and speaking in a kind and earnest manner, "if you did but know the extent to which an accident has placed you in my power! at this moment in my power! Really I almost tremble myself to think of it! I feel quite bowed down with the secret which I bear about with me on your behalf, and sometimes think it would be a relief to tell to some one who might share my anxieties and responsibilities on your behalf!" Mr Gammon rose, brought his chamber-candlestick out of the hall—lit it—bade Titmouse good-night, sadly but sternly—and shook him by the hand, adding, "I may rid you of my presence to-morrow morning, Mr Titmouse. I shall leave you to try to enjoy Yatton! May you find a truer—a more powerful friend than you will have lost in me!" Titmouse never shrunk more helplessly under the eye of Mr Gammon than he did at that moment.

"You—you—*won't* stop and take another drop of brandy-and-water, or what you like, with a poor devil, will you, Mr Gammon?" he inquired faintly. "It's somehow—most uncommon lonely in this queer, large, old-fashioned"—

"No, sir," replied Gammon peremptorily, and withdrew, leaving Titmouse in a state of mingled alarm and anger; the former, however, predominating.

"By jingo!" he at length exclaimed with a heavy sigh, after a reverie of about three minutes, gulping down the remainder of his brandy-and-water, "If that same gent, Mr Gammon, a'n't the—the—devil—he must be the best imitation of him that ever I heard tell of!" Here he glanced furtively round the room; then he got a little flustered; rang his bell quickly for his valet, and, followed by him, retired to his dressing-room.

The next morning the storm had entirely blown over. When they met

at breakfast, Titmouse, as Gammon had known would be the case, was all submission and respect; in fact, it was evident that he was thoroughly frightened by what had fallen from Gammon, but infinitely more so by the manner in which he had spoken overnight. That astute gentleman, however, preserved for some little time the haughty air with which he had met Titmouse; but a few words of the latter, expressing deep regret for what he had said through having drunk too much—poor little soul!—overnight, and his unqualifyingly submitting to every one of the requisitions which had been insisted on by Mr Gammon—quickly dispersed the cloud settled on his brow, when he entered the breakfast-room.

"Now, my dear Mr Titmouse," said he graciously, "you show yourself the gentleman I always took you for—and I forgot, for ever, all that passed between us, so unpleasantly, last night. I am sure it will never be so again: for now we entirely understand each other?"

"Oh yes—'pon my life—quite entirely!" replied Titmouse meekly, with a crestfallen air.

Soon after breakfast they adjourned, at Gammon's request, to the billiard-room; where, though that gentleman knew how to handle a cue, and Titmouse did not, he expressed great admiration for Titmouse's play, and exhibited lively interest in being shown how to get a ball, now and then, into each pocket at one stroke, a masterly manœuvre in which Titmouse succeeded two or three times, and Gammon not once, during their hour's play. Upon that occasion had occurred the conversation in which Titmouse made the suggestion of which we have already heard, viz. that Gammon should immediately clap the screw npon Aubrey, with a view to squeezing out of him at least sufficient to pay the £10,000 bond, and their bill of costs, immediately; and Titmouse urged Gammon at once to send Aubrey packing after Yahoo to York Castle, as an inducement to an early settlement of the remainder. Gammon, however, assured Mr Titmouse, that

in all probability Mr Aubrey had not a couple of thousand pounds in the world.

"Well—that will do to begin with," said Titmouse, "and the rest must come, sooner or later—eh, by Jove?"

"Leave him to me, my dear Titmouse," replied Gammon, smiling ominously, or rather to Mr Quirk—who'll ring him before he's done with him, I warrant you! But, in the meanwhile, if I work day and night, I will relieve you from this claim of Mr Quirk: for, in fact, I have little or no real interest in the matter."

"You'll take a slapping slice out of the bond, eh? Aha, Mr Gammon!—But what were you saying you'd do for me?"

"I repeat, that I am your only disinterested friend, Mr Titmouse; I shall never see a hundred pounds of what is going into Mr Quirk's hands; who, I must say, however," added Gammon with sudden caution, "has richly earned what he's going to get—but—to say the truth, by following my directions throughout. I was saying, however, that I had hit upon a scheme for ridding you of your difficulties. Though you have only just stepped into your property, and consequently people are very shy of advancing money on mortgage, if you'll only keep quiet, and leave the affair entirely to me, I will undertake to get you a sum of possibly twenty thousand pounds."

"My eyes!" exclaimed Titmouse, excitedly; quickly, however, adding with a sad air—"but then, what a lot of it will go to old Quirk!"

"He is rather a keen and hard—ahem! I own; but"—

"Pon my life, couldn't we do the old gent?"

"On no consideration, Mr Titmouse; it would be a fatal step for you—and indeed for me."

"What! and can he do anything, too? I thought it was only you."—The little fool had brought a glimpse of colour into Gammon's cheek—but Titmouse's volatility quickly relieved his tripping Prospero. "By the way—'pon my life—sha'n't I have to pay

it all back again! There's a go! I hadn't thought of that."

"I shall first try to get it out of Mr Aubrey," said Gammon, "and then out of another friend of yours. In the meanwhile we must not drop the Tag-rags, just yet." They then got into a long and confidential conversation together; in the course of which, Titmouse happened to pop out a little secret of his, which till then he had managed to keep from Gammon, and which occasioned that gentleman a great and sudden inward confusion—one which it was odd that so keen an observer as Titmouse did not perceive indications of in the countenance of Gammon; viz. his—Titmouse's—fervent and disinterested love for Miss Aubrey. While he was rattling on with eager volubility upon this topic, Gammon, after casting about a little in his mind, as to how he should deal with this interesting discovery, resolved for the present to humour the notion, and got out of Titmouse a full and particular account of his original "*smite*," as that gentleman called his passion for Miss Aubrey—the indelible impression she had made on his heart—the letter which he had addressed to her—[here Gammon's vivid fancy portrayed to him the sort of composition which must have reached Miss Aubrey, and he nearly burst into a gentle fit of laughter]—and, with a strange candour, or rather, to do him justice, with that frank simplicity which is characteristic of noble natures—he at length described his unlucky encounter with Miss Aubrey and her maid, in the winter; whereat Gammon felt a sort of sudden inward spasm, which excited a certain twinging sensation in his right toe—but it passed away—'twas, after all, only a little juvenile indiscretion of Titmouse's; but Gammon, with rather a serious air, assured Titmouse that he had probably greatly endangered his prospects with Miss Aubrey.

"Eh? Why, devil take it! a'n't I going to offer to her, though she's got nothing?" interrupted Titmouse with astonishment.

"True!—Ah, I had lost sight of

that. Well, if you will pledge yourself to address no more letters to her, nor take any steps to see her, without first communicating with me—I think I can promise—hem!" he looked archly at Titmouse.

"She's a most uncommon lovely gal"—he simpered, sheepishly. The fact was that Gammon had conceived quite another scheme for Titmouse—wholly inconsistent with his pure, ardent, and enlightened attachment to Miss Aubrey; 'twas undoubtedly rather a bold and ambitious one, but Gammon did not despair; for he had that confidence in himself, and in his knowledge of human nature, which always supported him in the most arduous and apparently hopeless undertakings.

There was a visible alteration for the better in the state of things at Yatton, as soon as Messrs Yahoo and Fitz-Snooks had been disposed of. Now and then a few of the distinguished people who had honoured Mr Titmouse by going out in procession to meet and welcome him, were invited to spend a day at Yatton; and generally quitted full of admiration of the dinner and wines, the unaffected good-nature and simplicity of their hospitable host, and the bland, composed, and intellectual deportment and conversation of Mr Gammon. When rent-day arrived, Mr Titmouse, attended by Mr Gammon, made his appearance in the Steward's room, and also in the hall; where, according to former custom, good substantial fare was set out for the tenants. They received him with a due respect of manner; but—alas—where were the cheerfulness, the cordiality, the rough, honest heartiness of days gone by, on such occasions? Few of the tenants stayed to partake of the good things prepared for them; a circumstance which greatly affected Mr Griffiths, and piqued Mr Gammon; as for Titmouse, however, he said, with a laugh, "Curse 'em! let 'em leave it alone, if they a'n't hungry!" and any faint feeling of mortification which he might have experienced, was dissipated by the intelligence of the amount paid into his banker's. Gannion was sen-

sible that the scenes which had been exhibited at Yatton on the first night of his protegé's arrival, had seriously injured him in the neighbourhood and county, and was bent upon effacing, as quickly as possible, such unfavourable impressions, by prevailing on Titmouse to "purge and live cleanly"—at all events for the present.

Let me pause now, for a moment, to inquire, ought not this favoured young gentleman to have felt happy? Here he was, master of a fine estate, producing him a splendid unencumbered rent-roll; a delightful residence, suggesting innumerable dear and dignified associations connected with old English feeling; a luxurious table, with the choicest liqueurs and wines, in abundance: he might smoke the finest cigars that the world could produce, from morning to night, if so disposed; had unlimited facilities for securing a distinguished personal appearance, as far as dress and decoration went; had all the amusements of the county at his command; troops of servants, eager and obsequious in their attentions; horses and carriages of every description which he might have chosen to order out—had, in short, all the "appliances and means to boot," which could be desired or imagined by a gentleman of his station and affluence. Mr Gammon was, though somewhat stern and plain-spoken, still a sincere and powerful friend, deeply and disinterestedly solicitous about his interests, and protecting him from villainous and designing adventurers; then he had in prospect the brilliant mazes of fashionable life in town—oh, in the name of everything that this world can produce, and of the feelings it should excite, ought not Titmouse to have enjoyed life—to have been happy? Yet he was not; he felt, independently of any constraint occasioned by the presence of Mr Gammon, full of deplorable and inexpressible wearisomeness, which nothing could alleviate, but the constant use of cigars, and brandy-and-water. On the first Sunday after the departure of Fitz-Snooks, Titmouse was prevailed upon to accom-

pany the devout and exemplary Gammon to church ; where, barring a good many ill-concealed yawns and constant fidgetiness, he conducted himself with tolerable decorum. Yet still the style of his dress, his air, and his countenance, filled the little congregation with feelings of great astonishment, when they thought that *that* was the new Squire of Yatton, and for a moment contrasted him with his simple and dignified predecessor, Mr Aubrey. As for the worthy vicar, Dr Tatham, Gammon resolved to secure his good graces, and succeeded. He called upon the worthy vicar soon after having heard from Titmouse, of his, Yahoo's, and Fitz-Snooks' encounter with Dr Tatham ; and expressed profound concern on being apprised of the rude treatment which he had encountered. There was a gentleness and affability—tempering, at once, and enhancing, his evident acuteness and knowledge of the world—which quite captivated the little Doctor. But, above all, the expressions of delicate sympathy and regret with which he now and then alluded to the late occupants of Yatton, and towards whom the stern requisitions of professional duty had caused him to play so odious a part, and his minute inquiries about them, drew out almost all that was in the little Doctor's heart concerning his departed friends. Gammon gazed with deep interest at the old blind stag-hound, and feeble Peggy ; and seemed never tired of hearing the Doctor's little anecdotes concerning them. He introduced Titmouse to the vicar ; and, in his presence, Gammon declared his (Titmouse's) hatred and contempt for the two fellows who were with him, when first he saw Dr Tatham ; who thereupon banished from his heart all recollection of the conduct which had so deeply hurt his feelings. Gammon, on another occasion, infinitely delighted the Doctor by calling on a Monday morning, and alluding with evident interest and anxiety to certain passages in his sermon of the day before, and which led to a lengthened and interesting discussion. In consequence of what then

transpired, the Doctor suddenly be-thought himself of routing out an old sermon, which he had once preached before the judges of assize :—and, during the week, he touched it up with a good deal of care for the ensuing Sunday—when he had the satisfaction of observing the marked and undeviating attention with which Mr Gammon sat listening to him ; and that candid inquirer after truth afterwards stepped into the little vestry and warmly complimented the Doctor upon his very satisfactory and masterly discourse. Thus it was that Dr Tatham came to pen a postscript to one of his letters to Mrs Aubrey, to which I have formerly alluded, and of which said postscript the following is a copy :—

"P.S. By the way, the altered state of things at the Hall, I am of opinion, is entirely owing to the presence and the influence of a Mr Gammon—one of Mr Titmouse's solicitors, and to whom he seems firmly attached. I have lived too long in the world to form hasty opinions, and am not apt to be deceived in my estimate of mankind : but I must say, I consider Mr Gammon to be a superior man, as well in character and intellect, as in acquirements. He possesses great acuteness and knowledge of the world, general information, a calm and courteous address—and above and beyond all, is a man of enlightened religious feeling. He comes constantly to church, and presents a truly edifying example to all around, of decorum and attention. You would be delighted to hear the discussions we have had on points which my sermons have suggested to him. He is really a powerful thinker ; and I assure you it requires some little logical skill to contend with him in argument. I preached a sermon lately, specially aimed at him, which, thank God ! I have every reason to believe has been attended with happy effects, and allayed some startling doubts which had been for years tormenting him. I am sure that my dear friend" (*i. e.* Mr Aubrey) "would be delighted with him. I had myself, I assure you, to overcome a

strong prejudice against him—a thing I always love to attempt, and have in a measure, in the present instance, succeeded. He speaks of you all frequently, with evident caution, but at the same time with deep respect and sympathy."

This postscript it was, which, as I have already intimated, suggested to Mr Aubrey to seek the interview with Gammon already described, and during which it was frequently present to his mind.

CHAPTER II.

TIPPETIWINK; AND TITMOUSE BECOME A GREAT LION.

WHILE, however, under the pressure of Mr Gammon's benumbing presence and authority, Titmouse was for a brief while leading this sober retired life at Yatton—why, he hardly knew, except that Gammon willed it—a circumstance occurred which suddenly placed him on the highest pinnacle of popularity in metropolitan society. I hardly know how to suppress my feelings of exultation, in retracing the rapid steps by which Mr Titmouse was transformed into a Lion of the first magnitude. Be it known, that there was a MR BLADDERY PIP, a fashionable novelist, possessed of extraordinary versatility and power; for he had at the end of every nine months, during the last nine years, produced a novel in three volumes—each succeeding one eclipsing the splendour of its predecessor, (in the judgment of the accomplished and disinterested newspaper critics)—in the "masterly structure of the plot"—the "vivid and varied delineation of character"—the "profound acquaintance with the workings of the human heart"—"exquisite appreciation of life in all its endless varieties"—"piercing but delicate satire"—"bold and powerful denunciations of popular vices"—"rich and tender domestic scenes"—"inimitable ease and grace"—"consummate tact and judgment"—"reflection coextensive with observation"—"the style flowing, brilliant, nervous,

varied, picturesque," *et cetera, et cetera, et cetera*. We have, in the present day, thank Heaven! at least two or three hundred such writers and chroniclers of their feats; but at the time which I am speaking, Mr Bladdery Pip was pretty nearly alone in his glory. Such was the man, to whose jaded brain it suddenly occurred, on glancing over the newspaper report of the trial of *Doe on the Demise of Titmouse v. Jolter*, to make the interesting facts of the case the basis, on quite a new plan, of a new novel, which was infinitely to transcend all his former works, and, in fact, occasion a revolution in that brilliant and instructive species of literature! To work went Mr Pip, within a day or two after the trial was over, and in an incredibly short space of time had got to the close of his labours. Practice had made him perfect, and given him infinite facility in the production of first-rate writing. The spirited publisher (Mr Bubble) then quickly set to work to "get the steam up"—but ah! how secretly and skilfully! For some time there appeared numerous intimations in the daily papers, that "the circles of ton" were "on the *qui vive*" in expectation of a certain forthcoming work, &c. &c. &c.—that "disclosures of a very extraordinary character" were being looked for—"attempts had been made to suppress," &c. &c.—"compromising certain distinguished,"

&c., and so forth ; all these paragraphs being in the unquestionable *editorial* style, and genuine indications of a mysterious under-current of curiosity and excitement, existing in those regions which were watched with reverential awe and constancy by the occupants of the lower regions. As time advanced, more frequent became these titillations of the public palate—more distinct these intimations of what was going forward, and might be shortly expected, from the appearance of the long-promised work. Take for instance the following, which ran the round of every newspaper, and wrought up to a high pitch the curiosity of three-fourths of the fools in the country :—

"The efforts made to deprive the public of the remarkable and *piquant* scenes contained in the forthcoming novel, and—in short—to suppress it, have entirely failed, owing to the resolution of the gifted author, and the determination of the spirited publisher ; and their only effect has been to accelerate the appearance of the work. It will bear the exciting and significant title—'TIPPETIWINK,' and is said to be founded on the marvellous circumstances attending the recent trial of a great ejection cause at York. More than one noble family's history is believed to be involved in some of the details which will be found in the forthcoming publication, for which, we are assured, there are already symptoms of an unprecedented demand. The 'favoured few' who have seen it, predict that it will produce a prodigious sensation. The happy audacity with which facts are adhered to, will, we trust, not lead to the disagreeable consequences that appear to be looked for, in certain quarters, with no little anxiety and dismay. When we announce that its author is the gifted writer of 'THE SILVER SPOONS'—'SPINNACH'—'THE PIROUETTE'—'TITTLE-TATTLE'—'FITZ-GIBLETS'—'SQUINT,' &c. &c. &c., we trust we are violating no literary confidence."

There was no resisting this sort of thing. In that day, a skilfully direct-

ed play of puffs laid prostrate the whole of the sagacious fashionable world ; producing the excitement of which they affected to chronicle the existence. The artilleryman, in the present instance, was a hack writer, hired by Mr Bubble—in fact, kept by him entirely—to perform services of this degrading description—and he sat from morning to night in a back-room on Mr Bubble's premises, engaged in spinning out these villainous and lying paragraphs concerning every work published, or about to be published, by Mr Bubble. Then that gentleman hit upon another admirable device. He had seven hundred copies printed off ; and, allowing a hundred for a *first edition*, he varied the title-pages of each of the remaining six hundred, by the words—"Second Edition"—"Third Edition"—"Fourth Edition"—"Fifth Edition"—"Sixth Edition"—and "Seventh Edition."

By the time, however, that the fourth edition had been announced, there existed a real rage for the book. The circulating libraries at the West End of the Town were besieged by applicants for a perusal of the work ; and "notices," "reviews," and "extracts," began to make their appearance with increasing frequency in the newspapers. The idea of the work was admirable. TIPPETIWINK, the hero, was a young gentleman of ancient family—an only child—kidnapped in his infancy by the malignant agency of "the demon Mowbray," a distant relative, of a fierce temper and wicked character ; who by these means had succeeded to the enjoyment of the estate, and would have come, in time, to the honours and domains of the most ancient and noble family in the kingdom, that of the *Earl of Frizzleton*. Poor Tippetiwink was at length, however, discovered by his illustrious kinsman, by mere accident, in an obscure capacity, in the employ of a benevolent linen-draper, *Black-bag*, who was described as one of the most amiable and generous of linen-drapers ; and, after a series of wonderful adventures, in which the hero displayed the most heroic constancy, the Earl

succeeded in reinstating his oppressed and injured kinsman in the lofty station which he ought always to have occupied. His daughter—a paragon of female loveliness—the *Lady Sapphira Sigh-away*—evinced the deepest interest in the success of *Tippetiwink*; and at length—the happy result may be guessed by the astute and experienced novel-reader. Out of these few and natural incidents, Mr Bladberry Pip was pronounced at length, by those who govern, if they do not indeed constitute, PUBLIC OPINION, to have produced an imperishable record of his genius; avoiding all the faults, and combining all the excellences, of all his former productions. The identity between Titmouse and *Tippetiwink*, Lord Dredlington and *Lord Frizleton*, Lady Cecilia and *Lady Sapphira*, and Mr Aubrey and "*the demon Mowbray*," was quickly established. The novel passed speedily into the tenth edition? An undoubted, and great sensation was produced; extracts descriptive of the persons, particularly that of Titmouse and the Earl, and Lady Cecilia, figuring in the story, were given in the London papers, and thence transferred into those all over the country. The author of the book, Mr Bladberry Pip, became a prodigious lion, and dressing himself in the most elaborate and exquisite style, had his portrait, looking intensely intellectual, prefixed to the tenth edition. Then came portraits of "Tittlebat Titmouse, Esq." (for which he had never sat), giving him large melting eyes, a pensive face, and a most fashionable appearance. The Earl of Dredlington and Lady Cecilia became also a lion, and lioness. Hundreds of opera-glasses were directed, at once, to their opera-box; innumerable were the anxious salutations they received as they drove round the Park—and round it they went three or four times as often as they had ever done before. Twas whispered that the King had read the book, and drank the Earl's health, under the name of Lord Frizleton—while the Queen did the same for Lady Cecilia as Lady Sapphira. Their appearance produced a manifest

sensation at both the levee and drawing-room—Majesty looked blander than usual as they approached. Poor Lord Dredlington, and Lady Cecilia, mounted in a trice into the seventh heaven of rapturous excitement; for there was that buoyant quality about their heads which secured them a graceful and rapid upward motion. They were both unutterably happy; living in a gentle, delicious tumult of exalted feeling. Irrepressible exultation glistened in the Earl's eyes; he threw an infinite deal of blandness and courtesy into his manners wherever he was, and whomsoever he addressed; as if he could now easily afford it, confident in the inaccessible sublimity of his position. It was slightly laughable to observe, however, the desperate efforts he made to maintain his former frigid composure of manner—but in vain; his nervousness looked almost like a sudden, though gentle, accession of St Vitus's dance. Innumerable were the inquiries after Titmouse—his person—his manners—his character—his dress, made of Lady Cecilia by her friends. Young ladies tormented her for his autograph. Twas with her as if the level surface of the Dead Sea had been stirred by the freshening breeze.

When a thing of this sort is once fairly set going, where is it to end? When fashion does go mad, her madness is wonderful; and she soon turns the world mad. Presently the young men appeared everywhere in black satin stocks, embroidered, some with flowers, and others with gold, and going by the name of "*Titmouse-Ties*"; and in hats, with high crowns and rims a quarter of an inch in depth, called "*Tittlebats*." All the young blades about town, especially the clerks and shopmen, dressed themselves in the most extravagant style; an amazing impetus was given to the cigar trade—whose shops were crowded, especially at nights; and every puppy that walked the streets, puffed cigar-smoke in your eyes. In short, pert and lively Titmice might be seen hopping about the streets in all directions. As for Tag-rag, wonders be-

fell him. A paragraph in a paper pointed him out as the original of *Blackbag*, and his shop in Oxford Street as the scene of Titmouse's service!—Thither, quickly, poured the tide of fashionable curiosity, and custom. His business was soon trebled. He wore his best clothes every day, and smirked and smiled, and hustled about amidst the crowd in his shop, in a perfect fever of excitement. He began to think of buying the adjoining premises, and adding them to his own; and set his name down as a subscriber of a guinea a-year to the "Decayed Draper's Association." Those were glorious times for Mr Tag-rag. He was forced to engage a dozen extra hands; there were seldom less than fifty or a hundred persons in his shop at once; strings of carriages stood before his door, sometimes two deep, and continual strugglings occurred between the coachmen for precedence. In fact, Mr Tag-rag believed that the MILLENIUM (about which he had often heard wonders from Mr Dismal Horror, who, it seemed, knew all about it—a fact of which he had first persuaded his congregation, and then himself) was coming, in earnest.

The undulations of the popular excitement in town, were not long in reaching the calm retreat of Mr Titmouse, in Yorkshire. To say nothing of his having on several occasions observed artists busily engaged in sketching different views of the Hall and its surrounding scenery, and, on inquiry, discovered that they had been sent from London for the express purpose of presenting to the excited public sketches of the "residence of Mr Titmouse," a copy of the inimitable performance of Mr Bladdery Pip—viz. "*TIPPETIWINK*," (tenth edition)—was sent down to Mr Titmouse by Gammon; who also forwarded to him, from time to time, newspapers containing those paragraphs which identified Titmouse with the hero of the novel, and also testified the profound impression which it was making upon the thinking classes of the community. Was Titmouse's wish to witness

the ferment he had so unconsciously produced in the metropolis, unreasonable? Yatton was beginning to look duller daily, even before the arrival of this stimulating intelligence from town; Titmouse feeling quite out of his element. So—Gammon *non contradicente*—up flew Titmouse to town. If he had not been naturally a fool, the notice he soon attracted in London must have made him one. He had been for coming up in a post-chaise and four; but Gammon, in a letter, succeeded in dissuading him from incurring so useless an expense, assuring him that men of even as high consideration as himself, constantly availed themselves of the safe and rapid transit afforded by the royal mail. His valet, on being appealed to, corroborated Mr Gammon's representations; adding, that the late hour in the evening at which that respectable vehicle arrived in town, would effectually shroud him from public observation. Giving strict and repeated orders to his valet to deposit him at once "in a first-rate West-End hotel," the haughty Lord of Yatton, plentifully provided with cigars, stepped into the mail, his valet perching himself upon the box-seat. That gifted functionary was well acquainted with town, and resolved on his master's taking up his quarters at the Harcourt Hotel, in the immediate vicinity of Bond Street.

The mail passed the Peacock, at Islington, about half-past eight o'clock; and long before they had reached even that point, the eager and anxious eye of Titmouse had been on the look-out for indications of his celebrity. He was, however, compelled to own that both people and places seemed much as usual—wearing no particular air of excitement. At this he was not a little chagrined, till he reflected on the vulgar ignorance of fashionable movements, for which the eastern regions of the metropolis were proverbial, and also on the increasing duskiness of the evening, the rapid pace at which the mail rattled along, and the circumstance of his being concealed inside. When his humble

hackney-coach (its driver a feeble old man, almost buried in a huge discoloured coat, with six or seven capes to it, with a wisp of straw for a hat-band, and sitting on the rickety box like a heap of dirty old clothes, and the flagging and limping horses looking truly miserable objects) had rumbled slowly up to the lofty and gloomy door of the Harcourt Hotel, it seemed to excite no notice whatever. A tall waiter, in a plain suit of black, with his hands stuck behind his coat-tails, continued standing in the ample doorway, eyeing the plebeian vehicle which had drawn up, with utter indifference—conjecturing, probably, that it had come to the wrong door. With the same air of provoking superciliousness he stood till the valet, having jumped down from his seat beside the driver, ran up, and in a peremptory sort of way exclaimed, “*Mr Titmouse of Yatton!*” This stirred the waiter into something like energy.

“Here, sir!” called out Mr Titmouse from within the coach; and on the waiter’s slowly approaching, the former inquired of him with a kind of grand indifference, “Pray, has the Earl of Dredlington been inquiring for me here to-day?” The words seemed to operate like magic; converting the person addressed, in a moment, into a slave—supple and obsequious.

“His lordship has not been here to-day, sir,” he replied in a low tone, with a courteous inclination, gently opening the door, and noiselessly letting down the steps. “Do you alight, sir?”

“Why—a—have you room for me, and my fellow there?”

“Oh yes, sir! certainly.—Shall I show you into the coffee-room, sir?”

“The coffee-room? Curse the coffee room, sir! Demme, sir, do you suppose I’m a commercial traveller? Show me into a private room, sir!” The waiter bowed low; and in silent surprise led Mr Titmouse to a spacious and splendidly furnished apartment—where, amidst the blaze of six wax candles, and attended by three waiters,

he supped, an hour or two afterwards, in solitary state—retiring about eleven o’clock to his chamber, overcome with fatigue—and brandy-and-water: having fortunately escaped the indignity of being forced to sit in the room where an English nobleman, two or three county members, and a couple of foreign princes, were sitting sipping their claret, some writing letters, and others conning over the evening papers. About noon, the next day, he called upon the Earl of Dredlington; and though, under ordinary circumstances, his lordship would have considered the visit rather unseasonable, he nevertheless received his fortunate and now truly distinguished kinsman with the most urbane cordiality. At the Earl’s suggestion, and with Mr Gammon’s concurrence, Titmouse, within about a week after his arrival in town, took a set of chambers in the Albany, together with the elegant furniture which had belonged to their late tenant, a distinguished fashionable, who had shortly before suddenly gone abroad upon a mission of great importance—to *himself*: viz. to avoid his creditors.

Mr Titmouse soon began to feel, in various ways, the distinction which was attached to his name—commencing, as he did at once, the gay and brilliant life of a man of high fashion, and under the august auspices of the Earl of Dredlington. Like as a cat, shod with walnut-shells by some merry young scapegrace, doubtless feels more and more astounded at the clatter it makes in scampering up and down the bare echoing floors and staircases; so, in some sort, was it with Titmouse, in respect of the sudden and amazing *éclat* with which all his appearances and movements were attended in the resplendent realms of which he had now become a denizen. ‘Tis a matter of indifference to a fool, whether you laugh *with* him or *at* him; so as you do but laugh—an observation accounting for much of the conduct of both Lord Dredlington and Titmouse. In this short life, and dull world, the thing is—to create a *sensation*, never mind how; and every opportunity of

doing so, should be gratefully seized hold of, and improved to the uttermost, by those who have nothing else to do, and have an inclination to distinguish themselves from the common herd of mankind, and show that they have not lived in vain. Lord Dredlington had got so inflated by the attention he excited, that he set down everything he witnessed, to the score of deference and admiration. His self-conceit was so intense, that it had long before consumed every vestige of sense he had had about him. He stood in solitary grandeur upon the lofty pillar of his pride, inaccessible to ridicule, and insensible indeed of its approach, like *vanity* "on a monument smiling at" *scorn*. Indeed

"His soul was like a star, and dwelt apart."

He did not conceive it possible for any one to laugh at him, or anything he might choose to do, or any one with whom he might think fit to associate, and introduce to the notice of society—which kind office he forthwith performed for Titmouse: to whose odd person, and somewhat eccentric dress and demeanour, his lordship, who imagined that the same operation was going on in the minds of other people, was growing daily more reconciled. Thus, with that which had at first so shocked his lordship, he got at length perfectly familiar and satisfied, and began to suspect whether it had not been assumed by Titmouse, out of a daring scorn for the intrusive opinions of the world, which showed a loftiness of spirit akin to his lordship's own. Besides, in another point of view—suppose the manner and appearance of Titmouse were ever so absurd, so long as his lordship chose to tolerate them, who should venture to gainsay them? So the Earl asked him frequently to dinner; took him with them when his lordship and Lady Cecilia went out in the evenings; gave him a seat in his carriage in going down to the House; and invited him to accompany him and Lady Cecilia when they either drove or rode round the Park. Dare I say privately to the reader, that three happier fools never before

went the round of the Park together? As for the matter of riding, Titmouse's assiduous attention at the riding-school, enabled him to appear on horseback without being glaringly unequal to the management of his horse, which, however, he more than once induced to back somewhat threateningly upon those of Lady Cecilia and the Earl. Titmouse happening to let fall, at the Earl's table, that he had that day ordered an elegant chariot to be built for him, his lordship intimated that a cab was the usual turn-out of a bachelor man of fashion; whereupon Titmouse the next day countermanded his order, and was fortunate enough to secure a cab which had just been completed for a young nobleman who was unable to pay for it, and whom, consequently, the builder did not care about disappointing. He soon provided himself with a great horse and a little tiger. What pen can do justice to the feelings with which he first sat down in that cab, yielding upon its thoroughly well-balanced springs, took the reins from his little tiger, and then heard him jump up behind! As it was a trifle too early for the Park, he suddenly bethought himself of exhibiting his splendours before the establishment of Mr Tag-rag; so he desired his little imp behind to run and summon his valet, who in a trice came down; and in answer to a question, "whether there wasn't something wanting from a draper or hosier," was informed glibly, that six dozen of best cambric pocket-handkerchiefs, a dozen or two pair of white kid gloves, half-a-dozen stocks, and various other items were "wanting"—(i. e. by the valet himself, for Titmouse was already profusely provided with these articles). Off, however, he drove—occupied with but one idea—and succeeded, at length, in reaching the Oxford Street establishment, before the door of which five or six carriages were standing. I should say that, at the moment of Mr Titmouse's strutting into that scene of his former miserable servitude, he experienced a gush of delight sufficient to have effaced all recollection of the wretchedness, privation, and oppres-

cion, endured in his early days. There was presently an evident flutter among the gentlemen engaged behind the counter—for, thought they—it must be “the great Mr Titmouse!” Mr Tag-rag, catching sight of him, bounced out of his little room, and hustled up to him through the crowd of customers, bowing, scraping, blushing, and rubbing his hands, full of pleasurable excitement, and exhibiting the most profound obsequiousness. “Hope you’re well, sir,” he commenced in a low tone, but instantly added, in a louder voice, observing that Mr Titmouse chose to appear to have come merely upon business, “what can I have the honour to do for you, sir, this morning?” And handing him a stool, Tag-rag, with a respectful air, received a liberal order from Mr Titmouse, and called for a shopman to make a minute of the precious words which fell from the lips of his celebrated customer.

“Dear me, sir, is that your cab?” said Mr Tag-rag, as, having accompanied Titmouse, bowing every step, to the door, they both stood there for a moment, “I never saw such a beautiful turn-out in my life, sir”—

“Ya—a—s. Pretty well—pretty well; but that young rascal of mine’s dirtied one of his boots a little—dem him!” and he looked terrors at the tiger.

“Oh dear!—so he has; shall I wipe it off, sir? Do let one of my young men”—

“No, it don’t signify much. By the way, Mr Tag-rag,” added Mr Titmouse in a drawling way, “all well at—at—demme if I’ve not, at this moment, forgot the name of your crib in the country”—

“Satin Lodge, sir,” said Tag-rag meekly, but with infinite inward uneasiness.

“Oh—ay, to be sure. One sees, ‘pon my soul, such a lot of places—but—eh?—all well?”

“All very well, indeed, sir; and constantly talking of you, sir,” replied Tag-rag, with an earnestness amounting to intensity.

“Ah—well! My compliments—”

here he drew on his second glove, and moved towards his cab, Tag-rag accompanying him—“glad they’re well. If ever I’m driving that way—good day!” In popped Titmouse—up jumped his tiger behind—and away darted the horse and splendid vehicle—Tag-rag following it with an admiring and anxious eye.

As Mr Titmouse sat in his cab, on his way to the Park, dressed in the extreme of the mode; his glossy hat perched sideways on his bushy, well-oiled, but somewhat mottled hair; his sartout lined with velvet; his full satin stock, spangled with inwrought gold flowers, and ornamented with two splendid pins, connected together with delicate double gold chains; the points of his shirt-collar turned down over his stock; his chased gold eye-glass stuck in his right eye; the stiff wristbands of his shirt turned back over his coat-cuffs: and his red hands concealed in snowy kid gloves, holding his whip and reins with graceful ease: when he considered the exquisite figure he must thus present to the eye of all beholders, and gave them credit for gazing at him with the same sort of feelings which similar sights had, but a few months before, excited in his despairing breast, his little cup of happiness was full, and even brimming over. This, though I doubt whether it was a just reflection, was still a very natural one; for he knew what his own feelings were, though not how weak and absurd they were; and of course judged of others by himself. If the Marquis of Whigborough, with his £200,000 a-year, and 5000 independent voters at his command, had been on his way down to the House, absorbed with anxiety as to the effect of the final threat he was going to make to the Minister, that, unless he had a few strawberry leaves promised him, he should feel it his duty to record his vote against the great BILL for “*Giving Every Body Every Thing*,” which stood for a third reading that evening; or the great Duke of —, a glance of whose eye, or a wave of whose hand, was sufficient to have lit up an European war, and who might at that

moment have been balancing in his mind the fate of millions of mankind, as depending upon his *flat* for peace or war:—I say, that if both, or either, of these personages, had passed or met Mr Titmouse, in their cabs, (which they were mechanically urging onward, so absorbed the while with their own thoughts, that they scarce knew whether they were in a cab or a hand-barrow, in which latter, had it been before their gates, either of them might, in his abstraction, have seated himself); Titmouse's superior acquaintance with human nature assured him, that the sight of his tip-top turn-out, could not fail of attracting their attention, and nettling their pride. Whether Milton, if cast on a desolate island, but with the means of writing *Paradise Lost*, would have done so, had he been certain that no human eye would ever peruse a line of it; or whether Mr Titmouse, had he been suddenly deposited in his splendid cab, in the midst of the desert of Sahara, with not one of his species to fix an envying eye upon him, would nevertheless have experienced a great measure of satisfaction, I am not prepared to say. As, however, every condition of life has its mixture of good and evil, so, if Titmouse had been placed in the midst of the aforesaid desert at the time when he was last before the reader, instead of dashing along Oxford Street, he would have escaped certain difficulties and dangers which he presently encountered. Had an ape, not acquainted with the science of driving, been put into Titmouse's place, he would probably have driven much in the same style, though he would have had greatly the advantage over his rival in respect of his simple and natural appearance; being, to the eye of correct taste, “when unadorned, adorned the most.” Mr Titmouse, in spite of

the assistance to his sight which he derived from his *neutral** glass, was continually coming into collision with the vehicles which met and passed him, on his way to Cumberland Gate. He got into no fewer than four distinct *rows*, to say nothing of the flying curses which he received in passing, between the point which I have named and Mr Tag-rag's premises. But as he was by no means destitute of spirit, he sat in his cab, on these four occasions, cursing and blaspheming like a little fiend; till he almost brought tears of vexation into the eyes of one or two of his opponents, (cads, watermen, hackney-coachmen, carters, stage-coachmen, market-gardeners, and draymen), who unexpectedly found their own weapon—i. e. *slang*—wielded with such superior power and effect, for once in a way, by a swell—an aristocrat. The more manly of his opponents, however, were filled with secret respect for the possessor of such unsuspected powers. Still it was unpleasant for a person of Mr Titmouse's distinction to be engaged in these conflicts; and he would have given the world to conquer his conceit so far as to summon his little tiger within, and surrender to him the reins. Such a ridiculous confession of his own incapacity, however, he could not think of, and he got into several little disturbances in the Park; after which he drove home: the battered cab had to be taken to the maker's, where the injuries it had sustained were repaired for the trifling sum of forty pounds.

* For a really *short-sighted* person a concave glass, and for a too *long-sighted* man a convex glass, is requisite: but simpletons who wear a glass for mere appearance' sakes, have one through which they can really see—i. e. a piece of common window-glass. Three-fourths of the young men about town wear the last kind of glass.

CHAPTER III.

THE MAEQUIS GANTS-JAUNES DE MILLEFLEURS ; AND THE REVEREND MORPHINE VELVET.

THE position obtained for Titmouse by the masterly genius of Mr Bladdery Pip, was secured and strengthened by much more substantial claims upon the respect of society than those derived from literary genius. Rumour is a dame always looking at objects through strong magnifying glasses ; and who, guided by what she saw, soon gave out that Titmouse was patron of three boroughs ; had a clear rent-roll of thirty-thousand a-year ; and had already received nearly a hundred thousand pounds in hard cash from the previous proprietor of his estates, as a compensation for the back rents, which that usurper had been for so many years in the receipt of. Then he was—in truth and fact—very near in succession to the ancient and distinguished Barony of Drelincourt, and the extensive estates thereto annexed. He was young ; by no means ill-looking ; and was—unmarried. Under the mask of *naiveté* and eccentricity, it was believed that he concealed great natural acuteness, for the purpose of ascertaining who were his real and who only his pretended friends and well-wishers, and that his noble relatives had given in to his little scheme, for the purpose of aiding him in the important discovery upon which he was bent. Infinite effect was thus given to the Earl's introductions. Wherever Titmouse went, he found new and delightful acquaintances ; and invitations to dinners, balls, routs, soirées, came showering daily into his rooms at the Albany, where also were left innumerable cards, bearing names of very

high fashion. All who had daughters or sisters in the market, paid eager and persevering court to Mr Titmouse, and still more so to the Earl of Dredlington and Lady Cecilia, his august *sponsors* ; so that—such being the will of that merry jade Fortune—they who had once regarded him as an object only of shuddering disgust and ineffable contempt, and had been disposed to order their servants to show him out again into the streets, were now in a manner, *magnified and made honourable* by means of their connection with him ; or rather, society, through his means, had become suddenly sensible of the commanding qualities and pretensions of the Earl of Dredlington and the Lady Cecilia. In the ball-room—at Almack's even—how many young men, handsome, accomplished, and of the highest personal consequence and rank, applied in vain for the hand of haughty beauty, which Mr Titmouse had only to ask for, and obtain ! Whose was the opera-box into which he might not drop as a welcome visitor, and be seen lounging in envied familiarity with its fair and brilliant inmates ? Were there not mothers of high fashion, of stately pride, of sounding rank, who would have humbled themselves before Titmouse, if thereby he could have been brought a suitor to the feet of one of their delicate and beautiful daughters ? But it was not over the fair sex alone that the magic of Mr Titmouse's name and pretensions had obtained this great and sudden ascendancy ; he excited no small attention among men of fashion—great numbers of whom

quickly recognised in him one fit to become their butt, and their dupe. What signified it to men secure of their own position in society, that they were seen openly associating with one so outrageously absurd in his dress—and vulgar and ignorant beyond all example? So long as he bled freely, and “*trotted out*,” briskly and willingly, his eccentricities could be not merely tolerated, but humoured. Take, for instance, the gay and popular MARQUIS GANTS-JAUNES DE MILLE-FLEURS; but he is worth a word or two of description, because of the position he had contrived to acquire and retain, and the influence which he managed to exercise over a considerable portion of London society. The post he was anxious to secure was that of the leader of *ton*; and he wished it to appear that that was the sole object of his ambition. While, however, he affected to be entirely engrossed by such matters as devising new and exquisite variations of dress, equipage, and cookery, he was, in reality, bent upon graver pursuits—upon gratifying his own licentious tastes and inclinations, with secrecy and impunity. He really despised folly, cultivating and practising only vice; in which he was, in a manner, an epicure. He was now about his forty-second year; had been handsome; was of bland and fascinating address; variously accomplished; of exquisite tact; of refined taste. There was, however, a slight fulness and puffiness about his features—an expression in his eye which spoke of *satiety*—and spoke truly. He was a proud, selfish, heartless person; but these qualities he contrived to disguise from many of even his intimate associates. An object of constant anxiety to him, was to ingratiate himself with the younger and weaker branches of the aristocracy, in order to secure a distinguished *status* in society; and he succeeded. To gain this point, he taxed all his resources; never were so exquisitely blended, as in his instance, with a view to securing his influence, the qualities of dictator and parasite; he always appeared the agreeable equal of those whom, for his life, he dared

not seriously have offended. He had no fortune; no visible means of making money—did not sensibly sponge upon his friends, nor fall into conspicuous embarrassments; yet he always lived in luxury.—Without money, he, in some inconceivable manner, always contrived to be in the possession of money’s worth. He had a magical power of soothing querulous tradesmen. He had a knack of always keeping himself, his *clique*, his sayings and doings, before the eye of the public, in such a manner as to satisfy it that he was the acknowledged leader of fashion. Yet was it in truth no such thing—but only a false fashion; there being all the difference between him, and a man of real consequence, in society, that there is between mock and real pearl—between paste and diamond. It was true that young men of sounding name and title were ever to be found in his train, thereby giving real countenance to one from whom they fancied, till they found out their mistake, that they themselves derived celebrity; thus enabling him to effect a lodgment in the outskirts of aristocracy; but he could not penetrate inland, so to speak, any more than foreign merchants can advance farther than to Canton, in the dominions of the Emperor of China.* He was only tolerated in the regions of real rank and fashion—a fact of which he had a galling consciousness; though it did not, apparently, disturb his equanimity, or interrupt the systematic and refined sycophancy by which alone he could secure his precarious position.

With some sad exceptions, I think that Great Britain has reason to be proud of her aristocracy. I do not speak now of those gaudy flaunting personages, of either sex, who, by their excesses or eccentricities, are eternally

* Since this was written, Great Britain has, by the demonstration of her irresistible naval and military power, and by the wisdom of her diplomacy, totally changed our relations with China—which has opened to us five of her ports, ceded to us a great island, and entered into a commercial treaty with us!—What further changes in this quarter are in store for us, regard being had to the astounding events now [1853] taking place in this vast and hitherto hidden section of mankind, are known to Providence alone.

obtruding themselves, their manners, dress, and equipage, upon the offended ear and eye of the public; but of those who occupy their exalted sphere in simplicity, in calmness, and in unobtrusive dignity and virtue. I am no flatterer or idolater of the nobility. I have a profound sense of the necessity and advantage of the institution: but I shall ever pay its members, personally, an honest homage only, after a stern and keen scrutiny into their personal pretensions; thinking of them ever in the spirit of those memorable words of Scripture—" *Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required,*" and that not hereafter only, but ~~here~~ also. No one would visit their faults and follies with more unsparing severity than I; yet making all just allowances for their peculiar perils and temptations, exposed, as they are, especially at the period of their entrance upon life, to sedulous and systematic sycophancy, too often also to artful and designing profligacy. Can, however, anything excite greater indignation and disgust in the mind of a thoughtful and independent observer, than the instances occasionally exhibited of persons of rank presumptuously imagining that they enjoy a sort of prescriptive immunity from the consequences of misconduct? An insolent or profligate nobleman is a spectacle becoming every day more dangerous to exhibit in this country; of that he may be assured.

Such are *my* sentiments—those of a contented member of the middle classes, with whom are all his best and dearest sympathies, and who feels as stern a pride in his "Order," and determination to "stand by it," too, as ever was felt or avowed by the haughtiest aristocrat for his; of one who, with little personal acquaintance with the aristocracy, has yet had opportunities of observing their conduct; and sincerely and cheerfully expresses his belief, that many, very many of them are worthy of all that they enjoy—are bright patterns of honour, generosity, loyalty, and virtue; that, indeed, of by far the greater proportion of them it may be said that they

"Have borne their faculties so meek—have been
So clear in their greet office, that their
virtues
Will plead like angels."

And finally, I say these are the sentiments of one who, if that Order were in jeopardy, would, with the immense majority of his brethren of the middle classes, freely shed his blood in defence of it: for its preservation is essential to the wellbeing of society, and its privileges are really ours.

To return, however, to the Marquis. The means to which, as I have above explained, he resorted for the purpose, secured him a certain species of permanent popularity. In matters of dress and equipage, he could really set the fashion; and being something of a practical humorist, and desirous of frequent exhibitions of his influence in order to enhance his pretensions with his patrons—and being also greatly applauded and indulged by the tradespeople profiting by the vagaries of fashion, he was capricious in the exercise of his influence. He seized the opportunity of the advent of my little hero, to display his powers advantageously. He waved his wand over Titmouse, and instantly transformed a little ass into a great lion. 'Twas the Marquis, who with his own hand had sketched off, from fancy, the portrait of Titmouse, causing it to be exhibited in almost every bookseller's shop window. Well knew the Marquis, that had he himself chosen to make his appearance once or twice in the Parks, and leading streets and squares, in—for instance—the full and imposing evening costume of the clown at the theatre, with cunningly coloured countenance, capacious white inexpressibles, and tasteful cap and jacket—within a few days' time several thousands of clowns would make their appearance about town, turning it into a vast pantomime. Could a more striking instance of the Marquis's power in such matters have been exhibited, than that which had actually occurred in the case of Titmouse? Soon after the novel of Tippetiwink had rendered our friend an object of

public interest, the Marquis happened, somewhere or other, to catch a glimpse of the preposterous little ape. His keen eye caught all Titmonse's personal peculiarities at a glance; and a day or two afterwards he appeared in public, a sort of splendid edition of Titmouse—with quizzing-glass stuck in his eye and cigar in his mouth; taper ebony cane; tight surtont, with the snowy corner of a white handkerchief peeping out of the outside breast-pocket; hat with scarce any rim perched slantingly on his head; satin stock bespangled with inwrought gold flowers; shirt collar turned down; and that inimitable strut of his!—“Twas enough; the thoughtful young men about town were staggered for a moment; but their senses soon returned. The Marquis had stamped the thing with his fiat; and within three days' time, that bitter wag had called forth a flight of Titmice which would have reminded you, for a moment, of the visitation of locusts brought upon Egypt by Moses. Thus had been effected the state of things, recorded towards the close of the preceding chapter of this history. As soon as the Marquis had seen a few of the leading fools about town fairly in the fashion, he resumed his former rigid simplicity of attire; and, accompanied by a friend or two in his confidence, walked about the town enjoying his triumph; witnessing his trophies—“Tittlebats” and “Titmouse-ties” filling the shop windows on the week-days, and their wearers peopling the streets on Sundays. The Marquis was not long in obtaining an introduction to the quaint little *millionaire*, whose reputation he had, conjointly with his distinguished friend Mr Bladberry Pip, contributed so greatly to extend. Titmouse, who had often heard of him, looked upon him with inconceivable reverence, and accepted an invitation to one of the Marquis's *recherché* Sunday dinners, with a sort of tremulous ecstasy. Thither on the appointed day he went accordingly, and, by his original humour, afforded infinite amusement to the Marquis's other guests. ‘Twas lucky for Tit-

mouse that, getting dreadfully drunk early in the evening, he was utterly incapacitated for accompanying his brilliant and good-natured host to one or two scenes of fashionable entertainment, in St James' Street, as had been arranged between the Marquis and a few of his friends!

Let us pause now to ask whether this poor little creature was not to be pitied? Did he not seem to have been plucked out of his own sphere of safe and comparatively happy obscurity, only in order to become every one's game—an object of everybody's cupidity and cruelty? May he not be compared to the flying-fish, who, springing out of the water to avoid his deadly pursuer there, is instantly pounced upon by his ravenous assailants in the air? In the lower, and in the upper regions of society, was not this the condition of poor Tittlebat Titmouse? Was not his long-coveted advancement merely a transition from scenes of vulgar to refined rapacity? Had he, ever since “luck had happened to him,” had one single friend to whisper in his ear one word of pity and of disinterested counsel? In the splendid regions which he had entered, who regarded him otherwise than as a legitimate object for plunder or ridicule, the latter disguised by the designing only? Was not even his dignified and exemplary old kinsman, the Earl of Dredlington, Right Honourable as he was, influenced solely by considerations of paltry self-interest? Had he not his own ridiculous and mercenary designs to accomplish, amidst all the attentions he vouchsafed to bestow upon Titmouse? ‘Twas, I think, old Hobbes of Malmesbury who held, that the natural state of mankind was one of war with each other. One really sees a good deal in life, especially after tracing the progress of society, that would seem to give some colour to so strange a notion. ‘Twas, of course, at first a matter of downright fisticuffs—of physical strife, occasioned, in a great measure, by our natural tendencies, according to him of Malmesbury; and aggravated by the desire which everybody

had, to take away from everybody else what he had. In process of time we have, in a measure, dropped the physical part of the business ; and instead of punching, scratching, kicking, biting, and knocking down one another, still true to the original principles of our nature, we are all endeavouring to circumvent one another : everybody is trying to take everybody in ; the moment that one of us has got together a thing or two, he is pounced upon by his neighbour, who in his turn falls a prey to another, and so on in endless succession. We cannot effectually help ourselves, though we are splitting our heads to discover devices by way of laws, to restrain this propensity of our nature : it will not do ; we are all overreaching, cheating, swindling, robbing one another, and, if necessary, are ready to ruin, maim, and murder one another in the prosecution of our designs. So is it with nations as with individuals, and minor collections of individuals. Truly, truly, we are a precious set, whether the sage of Malmesbury be right or wrong in his speculations !—

The more that the Earl and Lady Cecilia perceived of Titmouse's popularity, the more eager were they in parading their connection with him, and openly investing him with the character of a protégé. In addition to this, the Lady Cecilia had begun to have now and then a glimmering notion of the objects which the Earl was contemplating. If the Earl, having taken him down to the House of Lords, and secured him a place at the bar, would, immediately on entering, walk up to him, and be seen for some time—august instructor !—condescendingly pointing out to him the different peers by name, as they entered, and explaining to his intelligent auditor the period, mode, and cause, of the creation and accession of many of them to their honours, and also the forms, ceremonies, and routine of business in the House ; so Lady Cecilia was not remiss in availing herself, in her way, of the little opportunities which presented themselves. She invited him, for instance, one day early in the

week, to accompany them to church on the ensuing Sunday, and during the interval gave out amongst her intimate friends that they might expect to see Mr Titmouse in her papa's pew. The lion accepted the invitation ; and, on the arrival of the appointed hour, might have been seen in the Earl's carriage, driving to attend the afternoon's service, at the Reverend MORPHINE VELVET's chapel — *Rosemary Chapel*, near St James's Square.

"Twas a fashionable chapel ; a chapel of *Ease* : rightly so called, for it was a very easy mode of worship, discipline, and doctrine that was there practised and inculcated. If I may adopt without irreverence the language of Scripture, but apply it differently, I should say that Mr Morphine Velvet's yoke was *very "easy,"* his burden *very "light."* He was a popular preacher ; middle-aged ; sleek, serene, solemn in his person and demeanour. He had a very gentleman-like appearance in the pulpit and reading-desk. There was a sort of soothing, winning, elegance and tenderness in the tone and manner in which he '*prayed*' and '*besought*' his 'dearly-beloved brethren, as many as were there present, to accompany him,' their bland and graceful pastor, '*to the throne of the heavenly grace!*' Fit leader was he of such a flock. He read the prayers remarkably well, in a quiet and subdued tone, distinctly, and with marked emphasis and intonation—in fact, in a most gentlemanly manner—having sedulously studied under a crack theatrical teacher of elocution, who had given him several "*points*"—a new reading entirely of one of the clauses in the Lord's Prayer ! and which, he had the gratification of perceiving, produced a striking, if not, indeed, a startling effect. On the little finger of the hand which he used most, was to be observed the sparkle of a diamond ring ; and there was a sort of careless grace in the curl of his hair, which it had taken his hairdresser at least half an hour, before Mr Velvet's leaving home for his chapel, to secure. In the pulpit he was calm and fluent. That, he

rightly considered, ought not to be the scene for attempting intellectual display. He took care, therfore, that there should be nothing in his sermons to arrest the understanding, or unprofitably occupy it; addressing himself entirely to the feelings and fancy of his cultivated audience, in frequently interesting and even charming imaginative compositions. On the occasion I am speaking of, he took for his text a fearful passage of Scripture, 2 Cor. iv. 3.—“*But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.*” If any words were calculated to startle such a congregation as was arrayed before Mr Velvet, out of their guilty and fatal apathy, were not these? Ought not their minister to have looked round him and trembled? So one would have thought; but “dear Mr Velvet” knew his mission and his flock better. He presented them with an elegant description of heaven, with its crystal battlements, its jasper walls, its buildings of pure gold, its foundations of precious stones; its balmy air, its sounds of mysterious melody, its overflowing fulness of everlasting happiness — amidst which friends, parted upon earth by the cruel stroke of death, recognise and are reunited to each other, never more to pronounce the agonizing word “adieu!” And would his dear hearers be content to lose all this—content to *enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season?* Forbid it, eternal mercy!—But lest a strain like this should disturb or distress his august hearers, he took the opportunity to enforce and illustrate the consolatory truth that—

“Religion never was design’d
To make our pleasures less;”

and presently resuming the thread of his discourse, went on to speak of the unquestionably serious consequences attending a persevering indifference to religion; and proceeded to give striking instances of it in—the merchant in his counting-house, and on ‘change; the lawyer in his office; the tradesman in his shop; the operative in the manufactory; showing how each was absorbed in his calling—*labouring for the meat which perisheth*, till he had

lost all appetite and relish for spiritual food, and never once troubled himself about “the momentous concerns of hereafter!” Upon these topics he dwelt with such force and feeling, that he sent his distinguished congregation away—those of them, at least, who could retain any recollection of what they had heard for five minutes after entering their carriages—with lively fears that there was a black look-out, indeed, for—the kind of persons whom Mr Velvet had mentioned—viz. tailors, milliners, mercers, jewellers, and so forth: and who added graver offences, and of a more positive character, to the misconduct which he had pointed out—in their extortion and their rapacity! Would that some of them had been present!—Thus was it that “dear Mr Velvet” sent away his hearers overflowing with Christian sympathy; very well pleased with Mr Velvet, but infinitely better pleased with themselves! The deep impression he had made, was evidenced by a note which he received that evening from the Duchess of Broadacre; earnestly begging permission to copy his “beautiful sermon,” in order to send it to her sister, Lady Belle Almacks, who, through early dissipation, was ill of a decline, at Naples. I may as well here mention, that about the time of which I am speaking, there appeared an engraved portrait of “the Rev. Morphine Velvet, M.A., Minister of Rosemary Chapel, St James’s,” and a charming picture it was; representing the aforesaid Mr Velvet in pulpit costume and attitude, with hands gracefully outstretched, and his face directed upward, with a heavenly expression; suggesting to you the possibility that some fine day, when his hearers least expected it, he might gently rise out of his pulpit into the air, like Stephen, with heaven open before him, and be no more seen of men!

Four or five carriages had to set down before that containing the Earl of Dredlington, Lady Cecilia, and Mr Titmouse, could draw up; by which time there had accumulated as many in its rear, so eager were the pious aristocrats to get into this holy re-

treat. As Titmouse, holding his hat and cane in one hand, while with the other he arranged his hair, strutted up the central aisle, following the Earl and Lady Cecilia, he could hardly repress the exultation with which he thought of a former visit of his to that same fabric, some two years before. Then, on attempting to enter the body of the chapel, the vergers had politely but firmly repulsed him; on which, swelling with vexation, he had ascended to the gallery, where, after having been kept standing for ten minutes at least, he had been beckoned by the pew-opener towards, and squeezed into, the furthermost pew, close at the back of the organ, and in which said pew were two powdered footmen. If disgusted with his mere contiguity, guess what must have been his feelings when his nearest companion good-naturedly forced upon him a part of his prayer-book; which Titmouse, ready to spit in his face, held with his finger and thumb, as though it had been the tail of a snake! Now, how changed was all! He had become an aristocrat; in his veins ran some of the richest and oldest blood in the country; his brow might ere long be graced by the coronet which King Henry II. had placed upon the brow of the founder of his family, some seven hundred years before; and a tall footman, with powdered head, glistening silver shoulder-knot, and sky-blue livery, and carrying in a bag the gilded implements of devotion, was humbly following behind him! What a remarkable and vivid contrast between his present and his former circumstances, was present at that moment to his reflecting mind! As he stood, his hat covering his face, in an attitude of devotion—"I wonder," thought he, "what all these nob s and swells would say, if they knew the sort of figure I had cut here on the last time?" and again—"Pon my life, what would I give for—say Huckaback—to see me just now!" What an elegant and fashionable air the congregation wore! Surely there *must* be something in religion, when people such as were around him came so punctually to church, and he-

haved so seriously! The members of that congregation were, indeed, exemplary in their strict discharge of their public religious duties! Scarce one of them was there who had not been at the opera till twelve o'clock overnight; the dulcet notes of the singers were still thrilling in their ears, the graceful attitudes of the dancers still present to their eyes. Every previous night of the week had they been engaged in the brilliant ball-room, and whirled in the mazes of the voluptuous waltz, or glittering in the picturesque splendour of fancy dress, till three, four, and five o'clock in the morning: yet here they were in the house of God, in spite of all their exhaustion, testified by the heavy eye, the ill-suppressed yawn, the languor and *ennui* visible in their countenances, prepared to accompany their polite pastor, "with a pure heart and humble voice, unto the throne of the heavenly grace," to acknowledge, with lively emotion, that they "had followed too much the devices and desires of their own hearts;" praying for "mercy upon them, miserable offenders," that God would "restore them, being penitent," so that "they might thereafter lead a godly, righteous, and sober life." Here they were, decorous in manner, devout in spirit, earnest and sincere in repentance and good resolutions—knowing, nevertheless, the while, how would be spent the remainder of the season—of their *lives*; and yet resolving to attend to the respectfully affectionate entreaties of Mr Velvet, to he "*not hearers only, but doers of the word.*" Generally, I should say, that the state of mind of most, if not all of those present, was analogous to that of persons who sit in the pump-room, to drink the Bath or Cheltenham waters. Everybody did the same thing; and each hoped that, while sitting in his pew, what he heard would, like what he drank at the pump-room, in some secret mode of operation, not necessary to be inquired into, insensibly benefit the hearer, without subjecting him to any unpleasant restraint or discipline—without requiring active exertion, inconvenience, or

sacrifice. This will give you a pretty accurate notion of Lord Dreddlington's state of mind upon the present occasion. With his gold glasses on, he followed with his eye, and also with his voice, every word of the prayers, with rigid accuracy and unwavering earnestness; but as soon as Mr Velvet had mounted the pulpit, and risen to deliver his discourse, the Earl quietly folded his arms, closed his eyes, and, in an attentive posture, dignifiedly composed himself to sleep. Lady Cecilia sat beside him perfectly motionless during the whole sermon, her eyes fixed languidly upon the preacher. As for Titmouse, he bore it pretty well for about five minutes; then he pulled his gloves off and on at least half-a-dozen times; then he twisted his handkerchief round his fingers; then he looked with a vexed air at his watch; then he stuck his glass in his eye, and stared about him. By the time that Mr Velvet had ceased, Titmouse had conceived a great dislike to him, and was indeed in a fretful humour. But when the organ struck up, and they rose to go; when he mingled with the soft, crushing, fluttering, rustling, satin-clad throng—nodding to one, bowing to another, and shaking hands with a third, he "felt himself again." The only difference between him and those around him was, that they had learned to bear with calm fortitude what had so severely tried his temper. All were glad to get out; the crash of carriages at the door was music in their ears—the throng of servants delightful objects to their eyes—they were, in short, in the dear world again, and breathed as freely as ever!

Mr Titmouse took leave of the Earl and Lady Cecilia at their carriage-door, having ordered his cab to be in waiting—as it was; and entering it, he drove about leisurely till it was time to think of dressing for dinner. He had accepted an invitation to dine with a party of officers in the Guards, and a merry time they had on't. Titmouse in due time got, to speak plainly, blind drunk; and then one of his companions, rapidly advancing towards the same happy state, seized the opportunity, with a burned cork,

to blacken poor Titmouse's face all over—who thereupon was pronounced to bear a striking resemblance to one of the black boys belonging to the band of the regiment; and thus, when drunk, afforded nearly as much fun to his companions as when sober. Being quite incapable of taking care of himself, they put a servant with him into his cab, judging his little tiger to be unequal to the responsibility.

Titmouse passed a sad night, but got better towards the middle of the ensuing day; when he was sufficiently recovered to receive two visitors. One of them was young Lord Frederic Feather, accompanied by a friend, both of whom had dined in company with Titmouse overnight; and his lordship it was, who, having decorated Titmouse's countenance in the way I have described—so as to throw his valet almost into fits on seeing him brought home—imagining it might possibly come to his ears who it was that had done him such a favour, had come to acknowledge and apologise for it frankly and promptly. When, however, he perceived what a fool he had got to deal with, he suddenly changed his tactics—declared that Titmouse had not only done it himself, but had then presumed to act similarly towards his lordship, whose friend corroborated the charge—and they had called to receive, in private, an apology! Titmouse's breath seemed taken away on first hearing this astounding version of the affair. He swore that he had done nothing of the sort, but had suffered a good deal; dropping, however, from the tight rope, on observing the stern looks of his companions, he protested that at all events "he did not recollect" anything of the kind; on which they smiled good-naturedly, and said that that was very possible. Then Titmouse made the requisite apology; and thus this "awkward affair" ended. Lord Frederic continued for some time with Titmouse in pleasant chat; for he foresaw that, "hard up" as he frequently was, Mr Titmouse was a friend who might be exceedingly serviceable. In fact, poor Lord Frederic could, on

that very occasion, have almost gone on his knees for a cheque of Mr Titmouse upon his bankers for a couple of hundred pounds. Oh, thought that "noble" young spark—what would I have given to be in Titmouse's position, with his thirty thousand a-year, and a hundred thousand pounds of hard cash! But, as the reader well knows, poor Titmouse's resources, ample as they were, were upon a far less splendid scale than was supposed. Partly from inclination, and partly through a temporary sense of embarrassment, occasioned by the want of ready money, Titmouse did not spend a tenth part of the sum which it had been everywhere supposed he could disburse freely on all hands; and this occasioned him to be given credit for possessing all that rumour assigned

to him; and, moreover, for a disposition not to squander it. He had several times been induced to try his hand at *ecarté, rouge et noir*, and hazard; and had, on the first occasion or two, been a little hurried away, through deference to his distinguished associates, and bled rather freely; but when he found that it was a matter of business—that he must pay—and felt his purse growing lighter, and his pocket-book, in which he kept his bank-notes, rapidly shrinking in dimensions as the evening wore on, he experienced vivid alarm and disgust, and an increasing disinclination to be "victimised;" and his aversion to play was infinitely strengthened by the frequent cautions of his distinguished and disinterested monitor, the Earl of Dreddlington.

CHAPTER IV.

MR TITMOUSE PRESENTED AT COURT; AFTER A SLIGHT ACCIDENT TO THE EARL OF DREDDLINGTON.

But another step in Mr Titmouse's upward progress was taken presently, of a somewhat memorable character; I mean his presentation at court, by the Earl of Dreddlington. The necessity for such a move was explained to Titmouse by his illustrious kinsman, a day or two after the appearance of the ordinary official announcement of the next levee. This momentous affair was broached by the Earl, one day after dinner, with an air of almost mysterious anxiety and interest. Had, indeed, that stately and solemn old simpleton been instructing his gaping protégé, in the minutely-awful etiquettes requisite for the due discharge of his duties, as an ambassador sent upon a delicate and embarrassing mission to the court of his Sublimity the King of Sulkypunctilio, he could not have appeared more penetrated by a

sense of the responsibility he was incurring. He commenced by giving Titmouse a long history of the origin and progress of such ceremonies, and a minute account of the practical manner of their observance, all of which, however, was to Titmouse only like breathing upon a mirror—then passing as quickly out of one ear as it had entered into the other. But when the Earl came to the point of dress, Titmouse was indeed "a thing all ear, all eye," his little faculties being stimulated to their utmost. The next morning he hurried off to his tailor, to order a court dress. When it had been brought home for trial, and he had put it on, upon returning to his room in his new and imposing costume, and glancing at his figure in the glass, his face fell; and he felt infinitely disappointed. After gazing at him-

self for a few moments in silence, he suddenly snapped his fingers, and said to the tailor, who, with the valet, was standing beside him, "Curse me if I like this thing at all!"

"Not like it, sir!" exclaimed Mr Clipclose with astonishment.

"No, I don't, demme! Is *this* a court dress? It's a quaker's, made into a footman's! 'Pon my soul, I look the exact image of a footman; and a devilish bad one too!" The two individuals beside him turned suddenly away—looking indifferent directions—and from their noses there issued the sounds of ill-suppressed laughter.

"Oh, sir—I beg a thousand pardons!"—observed Mr Clipclose quickly, "what can I have been thinking about? There's the sword—we've quite forgot it!"

"Ah—'pon my life, I thought there was *something* wrong!" quoth Titmouse, as Mr Clipclose, having brought the sword from the table at the other end of the room, where he had laid it upon entering, buckled it upon his distinguished customer.

"I flatter myself that *now*, sir"—commenced he.

"Ya—as—Quite the correct thing! 'Pon my soul—must say—most uncommon striking!"—exclaimed Titmouse, glancing at his figure in the glass, with a triumphant smile. "Isn't it odd, now, that this sword should make all the difference between me and a footman, by Jove?" Here his two companions were seized with a simultaneous fit of coughing.

"Ah, ha—it's so, a'n't it?" continued Titmouse, his eyes glued to the glass.

"Certainly, sir," replied Mr Clipclose, "it undoubtedly gives—what shall I call it? a grace—a finish—a sort of commanding appearance—especially to a figure that becomes it"—he continued with cool assurance, observing that the valet understood him. "But—may I, sir, take so great a liberty? If you are not accustomed to wear a sword—as I think you said you had not been at court before—I beg to remind you that it will require

particular care to manage it, and prevent it from getting between"—

"Demme, sir!" interrupted Titmouse, turning round with an offended air—"d'y'e think I don't know how to manage a sword? By all that's tremendous"—and plucking the taper weapon out of its scabbard, he waved it over his head; and throwing himself into the first position—he had latterly paid a good deal of attention to fencing—with rather an excited air, he went through several of the preliminary movements. 'Twas a subject for a painter, and exhibited a striking spectacle—as an instance of power silently concentrated, and ready to be put forth upon an adequate occasion. The tailor and the valet, who stood separate from each other, and at a safe and respectful distance from Mr Titmouse, gazed at him with silent admiration.

When the great day arrived—Titmouse having thought of scarce anything else during the interval, and teased every one whom he had met with his endless questions and childish observations on the subject—he drove up, at the appointed hour, to the Earl of Dreddlington's; whose carriage, with an appearance of greater state than usual about it, was standing at the door. On alighting from his cab, he skipped so nimbly up-stairs, that he could not have had time to observe the amusement which his figure occasioned even to the well disciplined servants of the Earl of Dreddlington. Much allowance ought to have been made for them. Think of Mr Titmouse's little knee-breeches, white silks, gold shoe-buckles, shirt ruffles and frills, coat, bag, and sword; and his hair, plastered up with bear's grease, parted down the middle of his head, and curling out boldly over each temple; and his open countenance irradiated with a subdued smile of triumph and excitement! On entering the drawing-room he beheld an imposing object—the Earl in court costume, wearing his general's uniform, with all his glistening orders, standing in readiness to set off, and holding in his hand his hat, with its snowy plume. His pos-

ture was at once easy and commanding. Had he been standing to Sir Thomas Lawrence, he could not have disposed himself more effectively. Lady Cecilia was sitting on the sofa, leaning back, and languidly talking to him; and, from the start which they both gave on Titmouse's entrance, it was plain that they could not have calculated upon the extraordinary transmogrification he must have undergone, in assuming court costume. For a moment or two, each was as severely shocked as when his absurd figure had first presented itself in that drawing-room. "Oh, heavens!" murmured Lady Cecilia: while the Earl seemed struck dumb by the approaching figure of Titmouse. That gentleman, however, was totally changed, from the Titmouse of a former day. He had now acquired a due sense of his personal importance, a just confidence in himself. Greatness had lost its former petrifying influence over him. And, as for his appearance on the present occasion, he had grown so familiar with it, as reflected in his glass, that it never occurred to him that the case might be different with others who beheld him for the first time. When Titmouse beheld the military air and superb equipments of the Earl—notwithstanding that Titmouse, too, wore a sword—he felt himself *done*. He advanced, nevertheless, pretty confidently—hobbing about, first to Lady Cecilia, and then to the Earl; and after a hasty salutation, observed,— "Pon my life, my lord, I hope it's no offence, but your lordship *does* look most remarkable fine." The Earl made no reply, but inclined towards him magnificently—not seeing the meaning and intention of Titmouse, but affronted by his words.

"May I ask what your lordship thinks of *me*? First time I ever appeared in this kind of thing, my lord—ha! ha, your lordship sees!" As he spoke, his look and voice betrayed the overawing effects of the Earl's splendid appearance, which was rapidly freezing up the springs of familiarity, if not, indeed, of flippancy, which were bubbling up within the little bosom of

Titmouse, on his entering the room. His manner became involuntarily subdued and reverential. The Earl of Dredlington in plain clothes, and in full court costume, were two different persons; though his lordship would have been terribly mortified had he known that any one thought so. However much he now regretted having offered to take Titmouse to the levee, there was no escape from the calamity; so, after a few minutes' pause, his lordship rang the bell, and announced his readiness to set off. Followed by Mr Titmouse, the Earl slowly descended the stairs; and when within two or three steps of the hall floor, it distresses me to relate, that his lordship suddenly fell nearly flat upon his face, and, but for his servants' rushing up, would have been seriously hurt. Poor Titmouse had been the occasion of this dismal disaster; for his sword getting between his legs, down he went against the Earl, who went naturally down upon the floor, as I have mentioned. Titmouse was not much hurt, but terribly frightened, and became as pale as death when he looked at the Earl; who appeared a little agitated, but, not having been really injured, soon recovered a considerable measure of self-possession. Profuse were poor Titmouse's apologies, as may be supposed; but much as he was distressed at what had taken place, a glance at the angry countenances with which the servants regarded him, as if inwardly cursing his stupidity and clumsiness, stirred up his spirit a little, with a feeling of resentment. He would have given a hundred pounds to be able to discharge every one of them on the spot!—

"Sir—enough has been said," quoth the Earl, rather coldly and haughtily, tired of the multiplied apologies and excuses of Titmouse. "I thank God, sir, that I am not hurt, though at my time of life, a fall is not a slight matter. "Sir," continued the Earl bitterly—again interrupting Titmouse—"you are not so much to blame as your tailor; he should have explained to you how to wear your sword!" With this, having cut Titmouse to the

quick, the Earl motioned him towards the door. They soon entered the carriage; the door was closed; and, with a brace of footmen behind, away rolled these two truly distinguished subjects to pay their homage to Majesty—which might well be proud of such homage!—They both sat in silence for some time. At length—"Beg your lordship's pardon," quoth Titmouse, nearly bursting with suppressed fury, "but I wish your lordship only knew how I hate this cursed skewer that's pinned to me:" and he looked at his sword, as if he could have snapped it into halves, and thrown them through the window.

"Sir, I can appreciate your feelings. The sword was not to blame; and you have my forgiveness," replied the still ruffled Earl.

"Much obliged to your lordship," replied Titmouse, in a somewhat different tone from any in which he had ever ventured to address his august companion; for he was beginning to feel confoundedly nettled at the bitter contemptuous manner which the Earl observed towards him. He was also not a little enraged with himself; for he knew he had been in fault, and thought of the spurned advice of his tailor. So his natural insolence, like a reptile just beginning to recover from its long torpor, made a faint struggle to show itself—but in vain; he was cowed and overpowered by the Presence in which he was, and he wished heartily that he could have recalled even the last few words he had ventured to utter. The Earl had observed his presumptuous flippancy of manner, though without appearing to do so. His lordship was accustomed to control his feelings; and on the present occasion made some effort to do so, for fear of alienating Titmouse from him by any display of offended dignity.

"Sir, it is a very fine day," he observed in a kind manner, after a stern silence of at least five minutes.

"Remarkable fine, my lord. I was just going to say so," replied Titmouse, greatly relieved; and presently they fell into their usual strain of conversation.

"We must learn to bear these little annoyances calmly," said the Earl graciously, on Titmouse's again alluding to his mishap;—"as for me, sir, a person in the station to which it has pleased Heaven to call me, for purposes of its own, has his peculiar and grave anxieties—substantial anx—"

He ceased suddenly. The carriage of his old rival, the Earl of Fitz-Walter, passed him; the latter waved his hand courteously; the former, with a bitter smile, was forced to do the same; and then relapsing into silence, showed that *the iron was entering his soul*. Thus the Earl, in his own person, afforded a striking illustration of the truth of his observation to Titmouse.

Soon, however, they had entered the scene of splendid hubbub, which at once occupied and excited both their little minds. Without, was the eager crowd, gazing with admiration and awe at each equipage, with its brilliant occupants, that dashed past them:—then the life-guardsmen, in glittering and formidable array, their long gleaming swords and polished helmets glancing and flashing in the sunlight. Within, were the tall yeomen of the guard, in black velvet caps and scarlet uniforms, and with ponderous partisans, lining each side of the staircase—and who, being in the exact military costume of the time of Henry VIII., forcibly recalled those days of pomp and pageantry to the well-informed mind of Mr Titmouse. In short, for the first time in his life, he beheld, and was overwhelmed by, the grandeur, state, and ceremony which fence in the dread approaches to MAJESTY. He was, fortunately, far too much bewildered and flustered, to be aware of the ill-concealed tittering, and even laughter, which his appearance excited, wherever he went. In due course he was borne on, and issued in due form into the presence chamber—into the immediate presence of Majesty. His heart palpitated: his dazzled eye caught a glimpse of a tall magnificent figure standing foremost of a brilliant throng. Advancing—scarcely aware whether on his head or his

heels, he kneeled down, and tremulously kissed a hand extended towards him: then rising, went bobbing backwards, till he quitted through a different door; with no distinct impression of anything that he had witnessed!— "Twas all a dazzling blaze of glory—a dim vision of awe! Little was he aware, poor soul, that the King had required him to be pointed out upon his approach, having heard of his celebrity in society; and that he had had the distinguished honour of occasioning to Majesty a great effort to keep its countenance. It was not till after he had quitted the palace for some time, that he breathed freely again. Then he began to feel as if a vast change had been effected in him, by some mysterious and awful agency—that he was penetrated and pervaded, as it were, by the subtle essence of royalty—like one having experienced the sudden, strange, thrilling, potent influence of electricity. He imagined that now the stamp of greatness had been impressed upon him; that his

pretensions had been ratified by the highest authority upon earth. "Twas as if wine had been poured into a stream, intoxicating the tittlebats swimming about in it!—As for me, however, seriously speaking, I question whether anything more than an imaginary change had come over my friend. Though I should be sorry to quote against him language with which I have reason to believe he was not critically acquainted, I cannot help expressing an opinion that Horace must have had in his eye a ROMAN TITMOUSE, when he penned those bitter lines—

" *Licet superbus ambules pecunia
FORTUNA NON MUTAT GENUS.*
—*Videsne, Sacram metiente te viam
Cum bis trium ulnarum togā,
Ut ora vertat huc et hoc cunctum,
Liberrima indignatio?*
—*'Sectus flagellis hic triumviralibus
Praeconis ad fastidium,
Arat Falerni mille fundi jugera,
Et Appiam mannis terit!*'
*Sedilibusque magnus in primis eques
Othonē contemptō sedet."**

* Hor. Epod. iv. 5-16.

CHAPTER V.

A DROP OF THE GOLDEN SHOWER FALLS ON MR TAG-HAG, WHO RECEIVES PROMOTION.

WHILE Titmouse was making this splendid figure in the upper regions of society, forming there every hour new and brilliant connections and associations, and in a perfect whirl of pleasure from morning to night, he did not ungratefully manifest a total forgetfulness of the amiable persons with whom he had been so familiar, and from whom he had received so many good offices, in his earlier days and humbler circumstances. Had it not, however—to give the devil his due—been for Gammon, who was ever beside him, like a mysterious pilot, se-

cretly steering his little bark amidst the strange, splendid, but dangerous seas which it had now to navigate, I fear that, with Titmouse, it would have been—out of sight, out of mind. But Gammon, ever watchful over the real interests of his charge, and also delighted, through the native goodness of his heart, to become the medium of conferring favours upon others, conveyed from time to time, to the interesting family of the Tag-rags, special marks of Mr Titmouse's courtesy and gratitude. At one time, a haunch of doe venison would find its way to Mr

Tag-rag, to whom Gammon justly considered that the distinction between buck and doe was unknown; at another, a fine work-box and a beautifully bound Bible found its way to good Mrs Tag-rag; and lastly, a gay guitar to Miss Tag-rag, who forthwith began twang-twang, tang-a-tang-tanging-it, from morning to night, thinking with ecstasy and fond constancy, the while, of its dear distinguished donor; who, together with Mr Gammon, had, some time afterwards, the unspeakable gratification, on the occasion of their being invited to dine at Satin Lodge, of hearing her accompany herself, with her beautiful instrument, while singing the following exquisite composition, for both the words and air of which she had been indebted to her music-master, a youth with black mustaches, long dark hair parted midway on his head, and flowing down almost to his shoulders, shirt collars à-la-Byron, and eyes full of inspiration.

TO HIM I LOVE.

1.

(Affettuosamente.)

Ah me! I feel the smart
Of Cupid's cruel dart
Quivering in my heart,
Heigho, ah! whew!

2.

(Allegro.)

With him I love
Swiftly time would move;
With his cigar,
And my guitar,
We'd smoke and play
The livelong day,
Merrily, merrily!
Puff—puff—puff,
Tang-a-tang, tang-a-tang!

3.

(Adagio, et con molto espressione.)

When he's not near me,
O! of life I'm weary—
The world is dreary—
Myetic spirits of song,
Wreathed with cypress, come along!
And hear me! hear me!

(Teneramente.)

Singing,
Heigho, heigho—
Tootle, tootle, too,
A—lackaday!

Such were the tender and melting

strains which this fair creature, her voice a little reedy and squeaking, it must be owned, poured into the sensitive ear of Titmouse; and such are the strains by means of which, many and many a Miss Tag-rag has captivated many and many a Titmouse; so that sentimental compositions of this sort have become deservedly popular, and do honour to our musical and poetical character as a nation. I said that it was on the occasion of a dinner at Satin Lodge, that Mr Titmouse and Mr Gammon were favoured by hearing Miss Tag-rag's voice, accompanying her guitar; for when Mr Tag-rag had sounded Mr Gammon, and found that both he and Titmouse were perfectly prepared to accept of his hospitality, they were invited to dinner. A very crack affair it was, though I have not time to describe it,—given on a more splendid scale than Mr Tag-rag had ever ventured upon before. He brought a bottle of real champagne all the way from town with his own hands, and kept it nice and cool in the kitchen cistern for three days beforehand; and there was fish, soup, roast mutton, and roast ducks, roast fowls, peas, cabbage, cauliflowers, potatoes, vegetable marrows; there was an apple-pie, a plum-pudding, custards, creams, jelly, and a man to wait, hired from the tavern at the corner of the hill. It had not occurred to them to provide themselves with champagnes glasses, so they managed as well as they could with the common ones—all but Titmouse, who with a sort of fashionable recklessness, to show how little he thought of champagne, poured it out into his tumbler, which he two-thirds filled, and then drank off its contents at a draught! Mr Tag-rag trying to disguise the inward spasm it occasioned him, by a truly grievous smile. He and Mrs Tag-rag exchanged anxious looks; the whole of their sole bottle of champagne was gone already—almost as soon as it had been opened!

"I always drink this sort of stuff out of a tumbler; I do—'pon my life," said Titmouse carelessly; "it's a

devilish deal more pleasant than sipping it out of wine-glasses!"

"Ye-e-s—of course it is, sir," said Mr Tag-rag rather faintly. Shortly afterwards, Titmouse offered to take a glass of champagne with Miss Tag-rag!—Her father's face flushed; and at length, with a bold effort, "Why, Mr Titmouse," said he, trying desperately to look unconcerned—"the—the fact is, I never keep more than a dozen or so in my cellar—and most unfortunately I found this afternoon that six bottles had—burst—I assure you!"

"Pon my soul, sorry to hear it," quoth Titmouse in a patronising way; "must send you a dozen of my own—I always keep about fifty or a hundred dozen. Oh, I'll send you half-a-dozen!"

Tag-rag scarcely knew, for a moment, whether he felt pleased or mortified at this stroke of delicate generosity.—Thus it was that Titmouse evinced a disposition to shower marks of his favour and attachment upon the Tag-rags, in obedience to the injunctions of Gammon, who assured him that it continued to be of great importance to secure the good graces of Mr Tag-rag. So Mr Titmouse now drove up to Satin Lodge in his cab, and then rode thither, followed by his stylish groom; and on one occasion, artful little scamp! happening to find no one at home but Miss Tag-rag, he nevertheless alighted, and stayed for nearly ten minutes, behaving precisely in the manner of an accepted suitor, aware that he might do so with impunity since there was no witness present; a little matter which had been suggested to him by Mr Gammon! Poor Miss Tag-rag's cheek he kissed with every appearance of ardour, protesting that she was a monstrous lovely creature; and he left her in a state of delighted excitement, imagining herself the destined mistress of ten thousand a-year—the blooming bride of the gay and fashionable Mr Titmouse. When her excellent parents heard of what had that day occurred between Mr Titmouse and their daughter, they also

looked upon the thing as quite settled, and were eager in their expressions of gratitude to Providence. In the meanwhile, the stream of prosperity flowed steadily in upon Mr Tag-rag, his shop continuing crowded; his shopmen doubled in number:—in fact, he at length actually received, instead of giving payment, for allowing young men to serve a short time in so celebrated an establishment, in order that they might learn the first-rate style of doing business, and when established on their own account, he entitled to write up over their doors—"Timothy Tape, late from Tag-rag & Co., Oxford Street."

Determined to make hay while the sun shone, he resorted to several little devices for that purpose, such as a shirt front with frills in the shape of a capital "T," and of which, under the name of "Titties," he sold immense numbers amongst the Eastern swells of London. At length it occurred to Mr Gammon to suggest to Titmouse a mode of conferring upon his old friend and master a mark of permanent, public, and substantial distinction; and this was, the obtaining for him, through the Earl of Dredlington, an appointment as one of the *royal tradesmen*—namely, draper and hosier to the King. When Mr Tag-rag's disinterested and indefatigable benefactor, Gammon, called one day in Oxford Street, and, motioning him for a moment out of the bustle of his crowded shop, mentioned the honour which Mr Titmouse was bent upon doing his utmost, at Mr Gammon's instance, to procure for Mr Tag-rag, that respectable person was quite at a loss for terms in which adequately to express his gratitude. Titmouse readily consented to name the thing to the great man, and urge it in the best way he could; and he performed his promise. The Earl listened to his application with an air of deep anxiety. "Sir," said he, "the world is acquainted with my reluctance to ask favours of those in office. When I was in office myself, I felt the inconvenience of such applications abundantly. Besides, the appointment you

have named happens to be one of considerable importance, and requiring great influence to procure it. Consider, sir, the immense number of tradesmen there are, of every description, of whom drapers and hosiers, according to the last returns laid before Parliament at the instance of my friend Lord Goose, are by far the most numerous. All of them are naturally ambitious of so high a distinction: yet, sir, observe, that there is only one king and one royal family to serve. My Lord Chamberlain is, I have no doubt, harassed by applicants for such honours as you have mentioned."

Hereat Titmouse got startled at the unexpected magnitude of the favour he had applied for; and, declaring that he did not really care a single curse for Tag-rag, begged to withdraw his application. But the Earl, with a mighty fine air, interrupted him—"Sir, you are not in the least presuming upon your relationship with me, nor do I think you overrate the influence I may happen—in short, sir, I will make it my business to see my Lord Ko-too this very day, and sound him upon the subject."

That same afternoon an interview took place between the two distinguished noblemen, Lord Dreddlington and Lord Ko-too. Each approached the other upon stilts. After a display of exquisite tact on the part of Lord Dreddlington, Lord Ko-too, who made a mighty piece of work of it, promised to consider the application.

Within a day or two afterwards Mr Tag-rag received a letter from the Lord Chamberlain's office, notifying that his Majesty had been graciously pleased to appoint him draper and hosiery to his Majesty! It occasioned him feelings of tumultuous pride and pleasure, similar to those with which the Earl of Dreddlington would have received tidings of his long-coveted marquisate having been conferred upon him. He started off, within a quarter of an hour after the receipt of the letter, to a carver and gilder a few doors off, and gave orders for the immediate prepara-

tion of a first-rate cast, gilded, of the royal arms; which, in about a week's time, might be seen, a truly resplendent object, dazzlingly conspicuous over the central door of Mr Tag-rag's establishment, inspiring awe into the minds of passers-by, and envy into Mr Tag-rag's neighbours and rivals. He also had the warrant of his appointment framed and glazed, and placed in the most conspicuous part of his right shop-window. He immediately sent off letters of gratitude to Mr Titmouse, and to the "Right Honourable, the Most Noble the Earl of Dreddlington;" to the latter personage, at the same time, forwarding a splendid crimson satin flowered dressing-gown, as "an humble token of his gratitude for his lordship's mark of particular condescension."

Both the letter and the dressing-gown gave great satisfaction to the Earl's valet, (than whom they never got any further); and who, having tried on the glistening addition to his wardrobe, forthwith sat down and wrote a very fine reply, in his lordship's name, to the note which had accompanied it, taking an opportunity to satisfy his conscience, by stating to the Earl the next morning that a Mr Tag-rag had "*called*" to express his humble thanks for his lordship's goodness. He was, moreover, so well satisfied with this specimen of Mr Tag-rag's articles, that he forthwith opened an account with him, and sent a liberal order, to start with. The same thing occurred with several of the subordinate functionaries at the palace; and—to let my reader, a little prematurely, however, into a secret—this was the extent of the additional custom which Mr Tag-rag's appointment secured him; and, even for these supplies, I never heard of his getting paid. But it did wonders with him in the estimation of the world. 'Twas evident that he was in a fair way of becoming the head house in the trade. His appointment caused no little ferment in that nook of the city with which he was connected. The worshipful Company of Squirt-makers

elected him a member; and on a vacancy suddenly occurring in the ward to which he belonged, for he had a considerable shop in the city also, he was elected a common council-man.

Mr Tag-rag soon made a great stir as a champion of civil and religious liberty. As for church and county rates, in particular, he demonstrated the gross injustice and absurdity of calling upon one who had no personal occasion for the use of a church, of a county bridge, a county jail, or a lunatic asylum,—to be called upon to contribute to the support of them. A few speeches in this strain attracted so much attention to him, that several leading men in the ward, a very "liberal" one, intimated to him that he stood the best chance of succeeding to the honour of alderman on the next vacancy; and when he and Mrs Tag-rag were alone together, he would start the subject of the expenses of the mayoralty with no little anxiety. He went to the chapel no longer on foot, but in a stylish sort of covered gig, with a kind of coal-scuttle shaped box screwed on behind, into which was squeezed his footboy, (who, by the way, had a thin stripe of crimson let into each leg of his trousers, upon Mr Tag-rag's appointment to an office under the crown); he was, also, always a trifle later in arriving at the chapel than he had been accustomed to be. He had a crimson-velvet cushion running along the front of his pew, and the bibles and hymn-books were rebound and smartly gilded. He was presently advanced to the honoured post of chief deacon; and on one occasion, in the unexpected absence of the central luminary of the system, was asked to occupy the chair at a "great meeting" of the SOCIETY FOR THE PROMOTION OF CIVIL AND RELIGIOUS DISCORD; when he took the opportunity of declaring his opinion, which was enthusiastically cheered, that the principles of free trade ought to be applied to religion; and that the voluntary system was that which was designed by God to secure the free blessings of competition in spiritual teaching. As for Satin Lodge, he stuck two little

wings to it; and had one of the portraits of Tittlebat Titmouse, as Tipetiwink, hung over his drawing-room mantelpiece, splendidly framed and glazed.

Some little time after Tag-rag had obtained the royal appointment, which I have been so particular in recording, Gammon, *happening* to be passing his shop, stepped in, and observing Mr Tag-rag, cordially greeted him; and then, as if it had been a thought of the moment only, without taking him from the shop, intimated that he had been westward, engaged in completing the formal details of a re-arrangement of the greater portion of Mr Titmouse's extensive estates, upon which that gentleman had recently determined, and the sight of Mr Tag-rag's establishment had suggested to Mr Gammon, that possibly Mr Tag-rag would feel gratified at being made a party—for form's sake—to the transaction; as Mr Gammon was sure that Mr Titmouse would feel delighted at having associated with the Earl of Dredlington, and one or two other persons of distinction, in the meditated arrangement, the name of so early and sincere a friend as Mr Tag-rag; "one who, moreover"—here Gammon paused, and gave a smile of inexpressible significance, "but it was not for *him* to hint his suspicions"—

"Sir—I—I—will you come into my room?" interrupted Tag-rag, breathlessly, anxious to have a more definite indication of Mr Gammon's opinion; but that gentleman, looking at his watch, pleaded want of time, and, suddenly shaking Mr Tag-rag by the hand, moved towards the door.

"You were talking of signing, sir—Have you got with you what you want signed? I'll sign anything!—anything for Mr Titmouse; only too proud—it's quite an honour to be in any way connected with him!" Gammon, on hearing this, felt in his pockets, as if he supposed that he should find there what he perfectly well knew had been lying ready, cut and dried, in his safe at Saffron Hill, for months.

"I find I have not got the little

document with me," said he carelessly; "I suppose it's lying about, with other loose papers, at the office, or I may have left it at the Earl's"—[though Gammon's objects required him here to allude to the Earl of Dredlington, I think it only fair to say that he had never been, for one instant in his life, in that great man's company.]

"I'll tell you what, Mr Gammon," said Tag-rag, after a moment's pause,—"Your office is at Saffron Hill? Well, I shall be passing in your direction to-morrow, on my way to my city establishment, about noon, and will look in and do all you wish."

"Could you arrange to meet the Earl there?—or, as his lordship's movements are—ah, ha!—not very?"

"Should be most proud to meet his lordship, sir, to express my personal gratitude"—

"Oh, the Earl never likes to be reminded, Mr Tag-rag, of any little courtesy or kindness he may have conferred! But if you will be with us about twelve, we can wait a little while; and if his lordship should not be punctual, we must even let you sign first, ah, ha!—and explain it to his lordship on his arrival, for I know your time is precious, Mr Tag-rag! Gracious! Mr Tag-rag, what a constant stream of customers you have!—I heard it said, the other day, that you were rapidly absorbing all the leading business in your line in Oxford Street."

"You're very polite, Mr Gammon! Certainly, I've no reason to complain. I always keep the best of everything, both here and in the city, pay ready money, and sell at the lowest prices, and spare no pains to please; and it's hard if!"

"Ah, how do you do?" quoth Gammon, suddenly starting, and bowing to some one on the other side of the way, whom he did *not* see. "Well, good-day, Mr Tag-rag—good-day! To-morrow at twelve, by the way?"

"I'm yours to command, Mr Gammon," replied Tag-rag; and so they parted. Just about twelve o'clock the next day, the latter, in a great bustle, saying he had fifty places to

call at in the city, made his appearance at Saffron Hill.

"His lordship a'n't here, I suppose?" quoth he, after shaking hands with Mr Quirk and Mr Gammon. The latter gentleman pulled out his watch, and, shrugging his shoulders, said with a smile, "No—we'll give him half an hour's grace."

"Half an hour, my dear sir!" exclaimed Tag-rag, "I couldn't stay so long, even for the high honour of meeting his lordship. I am a man of business, he isn't; first come first served, you know, eh? All fair that!" There were a good many recently engrossed parchments and writings scattered over the table, and from among them Gammon, after tossing them about for some time, at length drew out a sheet of foolscap. It was stamped, and there was writing upon the first and second pages.

"Now, gentlemen, quick's the word—time's precious!" said Tag-rag, taking up a pen and dipping it into the inkstand. Gammon, with an unconcerned air, placed before him the document he had been looking for. "Ah, how well I know the hand-writing! That flourish of his—a sort of boldness about it, a'n't there?" said Tag-rag, observing the signature of Titmouse immediately above the spot on which he was going to place his own; there being written in pencil, underneath, the word "Dredlington," evidently for the intended signature of the Earl. "I'm between two good ones, at any rate, eh?" said Tag-rag. Gammon or Quirk said something about a "term to attend the inheritance"—"trustee of an outstanding term"—"legal estate vested in the trustees"—"too great power to be put in the hands of any but those of the highest honour."

"Stay!" quoth Gammon, ringing his little hand-bell—"nothing like regularity, even in trifles." He was answered by one of the clerks, a very dashing person—"We only wish you to witness a signature," said Gammon. "Now, we shall release you, Mr Tag-rag, in a moment. Say 'I deliver this as my act and deed'—

putting your finger on the little wafer there."

So said, and so did, Mr Tag-rag as he had been directed ; the clerk wrote his name under the witnessing clause, "Abominable Amminadab ;" and from that moment Mr Tag-rag had unconsciously acquired an interest in the future stability of Mr Titmouse's fortunes, to the extent of some THIRTY THOUSAND POUNDS.

"Now, gentlemen, you'll make my compliments to his lordship, and if he asks how I came to sign before him, explain the hurry I was in. Time and tide wait for no man. Good morning, gentlemen ; good morning ; best regards to our friend, Mr Titmouse." Gammon attended him to the door, cordially shaking him by the hand, and presently returned to the room he had just quitted, where he found Mr Quirk holding in his hand the document signed by Tag-rag ; which was, in fact, only a joint and several bond, conditioned in a penalty of forty thousand pounds, for the due repayment, by Titmouse, of twenty thousand pounds, and interest at five per cent, about to be advanced to him on mortgage of a portion of the Yatton property. Gammon, sitting down, gently took the instrument from Mr Quirk, and with a bit of India-rubber calmly effaced the pencilled signature of "Dreddington."

"You're a ve-ry clever fellow, Gammon !" exclaimed Mr Quirk presently, with a sort of sigh, and after, as it were, holding his breath for some time. Gammon made no reply. His face was slightly pale, and wore an anxious expression. "It will do now," continued Mr Quirk, rubbing his hands, and with a gleeful expression of countenance.

"That remains to be seen," replied Gammon in a low tone.

"Eh ? What ? Does anything occur—eh ? By Jove, no screw loose, I hope ?"

"No—but we're in very deep water now, Mr Quirk"—

"Well—devil only cares, so long as you keep a sharp look-out, Gammon.

I'll trust the helm to you ! I'll pit you against Old Nick any day, friend Gammon!"

As Gammon did not seem in a talkative mood, Quirk shortly afterwards left him.

Now, though Mr Tag-rag is no favourite of mine, I begin to feel a good deal of anxiety on his behalf. I wish he had not been in so vast a "hurry," in a matter which required such grave deliberation, as "signing, sealing, and delivering." When a man is called on to go through so serious a ceremony, it would be well if he could be apprised of the significance of the formula—"I deliver this as my act and deed." Thus hath expressed himself upon this point, a great authority in the law, old Master Plowden. 'Tis a passage somewhat quaint in form, but not the less forcible and important in substance :—

"Wordes are oft spoken unadvisedly, and pass from men lightly and inconsiderately ; but, where the agreement is by *deed*, there is more time for deliberation ; for when a man passes a thing by *deed*, first, there is the determination of the mind to do it, and upon that he causes it to be *written*, which is one part of deliberation ; and, afterwards, he *puts his seal to it*, which is another part of deliberation ; and, lastly, he *delivers the writing as his deed*, which is the consummation of his resolution. So that there is great deliberation used in the making of deeds, for which reason they are received as a *lien*, final to the party, and are adjudged to bind the party, without examining upon what cause or consideration they were made."*

Possibly some one now reading these pages, hath had dismal experience in the matter above-mentioned ; and I hope that such experience, a due reflection will avert from many a reader. As for Tag-rag, it may turn out that our fears for him are groundless : nevertheless one hates to see men do important things in a hurry :—and, as we shall lose sight of Mr Tag-rag for some time, there can be no harm in wishing him well out of what he has just done.

"If it were *done*, when 'tis done, then 'twere well

It were done quickly"—

and not otherwise.

* Plowden's *Commentaries*, 308 a, (Sharrington v Strotton).

CHAPTER VI

MR TITMOUSE RECEIVES THE EARL OF DREDDLINGTON AND LADY CECILIA, THE MARQUIS GANTS-JAUNES DE MILLEFLEURS, MR VENOM TUFT, AND MR GAMMON, AT YATTON.

THE London season was now advancing towards its close. Fine ladies were sated and exhausted with operas, concerts, balls, routs, soirées, assemblies, bazars, fêtes, and the Park. Their lords were getting tired of their clubs during the day, and hurried dinners, late hours, foul air, and long speeches, at the two Houses ; where, however they might doze away the time, they could seldom get the luxury of a downright nap for more than an hour or two together—always waking, and fancying themselves in the tower of Babel, and that it was on fire, so strange and startling were the lights and the hubbub ! The very whippers-in were looking jaded and done—each like a Smithfield drover's dog on a Monday night, which at length can neither bark nor bite in return for a kick or a blow, and, hoarse and wearied, falls asleep on his way home—a sort of somnambulist. Where the Earl of Dreddlington and Lady Cecilia were to pass their autumn, was a question beginning to be discussed rather anxiously. Any one glancing over their flourishing list of residences in England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland, as paraded in the Peerages and Court Guides, would have supposed that they had an ample choice before them : but the reader of this history knows better. The mortifying explanation—mortifying to the poor Earl—having been once given by me, I shall not do so again. Suffice it to say, that Poppleton Hall, Hertfordshire, had its disadvantages ; there they must keep up a full establishment, and receive county company

and other visitors—being in arrear with much hospitality. "Twas expensive work, also, at the watering places ; and costly, and also troublesome, at the Earl's advanced period of life, to go abroad. Pensively ruminating on these matters one evening, they were interrupted by a servant bringing in a note, which proved to be from Titmouse—inviting them, in terms of profound courtesy, and great cordiality, to honour Yatton, by making a stay there during as great a portion of the autumn as they could not better occupy. Mr Titmouse frankly added, that he could not avoid acknowledging some little degree of selfishness in giving the invitation—namely, in expressing a hope that the Earl's presence would afford him, if so disposed, an opportunity of introducing his host to any of the leading members of the county who might be honoured by the Earl's acquaintance ; that, situated as Titmouse was, he owned to an increasing anxiety on that point. He added, that he trusted the Earl and Lady Cecilia would consider Yatton, while they were there, as in all respects their own residence, and that no exertion should be wanting to render their stay as agreeable as possible. The humble appeal of Titmouse prevailed with his august kinsman ; who, on the next day, sent him a letter saying that his lordship fully recognised the claims which Mr Titmouse had upon him, as the head of the family, and that his lordship should feel happy in availing himself of the opportunity which offered itself, of placing Mr Titmouse on a proper

footing of intercourse with the people of the county. That, for this purpose, his lordship should decline any invitations—he sighed as he wrote it, for he had no prospect of any—they might receive to pass their autumn elsewhere, &c. &c. &c. In plain English, they jumped, but as decorously as possible, at the invitation. It had emanated originally from Gammon, who, from motives of his own, had suggested it to Titmouse, bade him act upon it, and drawn up the letter conveying it. I say, from motives of his own, Gammon was bent upon becoming personally acquainted with the Earl, and fixing himself, if possible, thoroughly in his lordship's confidence. He had contrived to ascertain from Titmouse, without that gentleman's being, however, aware of it, that the few occasions on which his (Gammon's) name had been mentioned by the Earl, it had been accompanied by slighting expressions—by indications of even dislike and suspicion. Give me, however, thought he, but the opportunity, and I will soon change the nature of the Earl's feelings towards me—or I am not he whom I take myself to be. As soon, therefore, as the Earl's acceptance of the invitation had been communicated to Gammon, he resolved to be one of the guests at Yatton during the time of the Earl's stay—a step, into the propriety of which he easily brought Mr Quirk to enter, but which he did not, for the present, communicate to Titmouse, lest he should, by prematurely disclosing it to the Earl, raise any obstacle, arising out of an objection on the part of his lordship; who, if he but found Gammon actually there, must submit to the infliction with what grace he might. In due time it was notified on the part of the Earl, by his man of business, to Mr Titmouse, who had gone down to Yatton, through his man of business, that the Earl, and rather a formidable portion of his establishment, would make their appearance at Yatton by a named day. The Earl had chosen to extend the invitation to Miss Macspleuchan—simply because he did not

know how else to dispose of her, and because it might prove embarrassing to his daughter to be the sole lady-guest of her bachelor kinsman—and also to as many attendants as he thought it prudent to take with him, instead of letting them consume their board-wages in entire idleness in town or at Poppletown. Heavens! what accommodation was required, for the Earl, for the Lady Cecilia, each of their personal attendants, Miss Macspleuchan, and five servants! Then there were two other guests invited, in order to form company and amusement for the Earl—the Marquis Gants-Jaunes de Millefleurs, and a Mr Tuft. Room must be made for these; and, to secure it, Mr Titmouse and Mr Gammon were driven to almost the extremities of the house. Four servants, in a sort of baggage-waggon, preceded the arrival of the Earl and Lady Cecilia by a day or two, in order to "arrange everything;" and, somehow or another, one of the first things that was done with this view, was to instal his lordship's chief servants in the quarters of Mr Titmouse's servants, who, it was suggested, should endeavour to make themselves as comfortable as they could in some little unfurnished rooms over the stables! And, in a word, before Mr Titmouse's grand guests had been at the Hall four-and-twenty hours, there was established there the same freezing state and solemn ceremony which prevailed in the Earl's own establishment. Down came at length, thundering through the village, the Earl's dusty travelling-carriage and four; himself, Lady Cecilia, and Miss Macspleuchan within, his valet and Lady Cecilia's maid behind: presently it wound round the park road, crashing and flashing through the gravel, and rattling under the old gateway, and at length stood before the Hall door—the reeking horses pulled up with a sudden jerk, which almost threw them all upon their haunches. Mr Titmouse was in readiness to receive his distinguished kinsfolk; the carriage-door was opened—down went the steps—and in a few moments'

time the proud old Earl of Dredlington and his proud daughter, having entered the Hall, had become the guests of its flustered and ambitious little proprietor. While all the visitors, great and small, are occupied in their dressing-rooms, recovering themselves from the cramp and fatigue of a long journey, and preparing to make their appearance at dinner, let me take the opportunity to give you a sketch of the only one of them, of the smaller sort, to whom you are at present a stranger: I mean Mr Tuft—*Mr VENOM TUFT*.

Oft hath an inexperienced mushroom-hunter, deceived at a distance, run up to secure what seemed to be a fine cluster of mushrooms, growing under the shade of a stately tree, but which, on stooping down to gather them, he discovers with disappointment and disgust to be no mushrooms at all, but vile, unwholesome—even poisonous funguses: which, to prevent their similarly deluding others, he kicks up and crushes under foot. And is not this a type of what often happens in society? Under the “cold shade of aristocracy,” how often is to be met with—*THE SYCOPHANT*? Mr Venom Tuft was one of them. His character was written in his face. Disagreeable to look at—though he thought far otherwise—he yet contrived to make himself pleasant to be listened to, for a while, by the languid and *ennuyé* fashionable. He spoke ever—

“In a toady’s key,
With bated breath and whispering humbleness.”

His person was at once effeminate and coarse; his gesture and address were cringing. There was an intolerable calmness and gentleness about them at all times, but especially while labouring in his vocation. He had the art of administering appropriate and acceptable flattery by a look only, deferential and insinuating, as well as by words. He had always at command a copious store of gossip, highly seasoned with scandal; which he collected and prepared with industry and judgment. Clever toadies are generally bitter ones. With sense enough

to perceive, but not spirit enough to abandon, their own odious propensities, they are aware of the ignominious spectacle they exhibit before the eyes of persons of the least degree of independence and discernment, and whose open contempt they have neither the power nor manliness to resent. Then their smothered rage takes an inward turn; it tends to, and centres in the tongue, from which it falls in drops of scalding virus; and thus it is, that the functions of sycophant and slanderer are so often found united in the same miserable individual. Does a sycophant fancy that his patron, if one may use such a term, is not aware of his degrading character and position? Would that he could but hear himself spoken of by those before whom he has last been prostrating himself! If he could for but a moment “see himself as others see him”—surely he would instantly wriggle out of the withering sight of man! But Mr Tuft was not an everyday toady. Being a clever man, it occurred to him as calculated infinitely to enhance the value of his attentions, if he could get them to be regarded as those of a man of ability and reputation. So reasonable a wish, as thus to rise to eminence in the calling in life to which he had devoted himself—viz. toadyism—stimulated him to considerable exertion, which was in time rewarded by a measure of success; for he began to be looked on as *something* of a literary man. To aid this impression, he would spend his mornings in ‘reading up,’ in those quarters whence he might cull materials for display, in society, at a later period of the day; when he would watch his opportunity, or, if none presented itself, make one, by diverting the current of conversation into the channel on which glistened the gay and varied bordering of his recent acquisitions. All his knowledge was, in fact, of this gossiping *pro hac vice* character.—He was eminently skilful in administering his flattery. Did he dine with his Grace, or his Lordship, whose speech in the House appeared in that or the preceding day’s

newspapers? Mr Tuft got it up carefully, and also the speech in answer to it, with a double view—to show himself at home in the question! and then to differ, a very, very little, with his Grace, or his Lordship, in order to be presently convinced, and set right by them! Or when conversation turned upon the topics which had, overnight, called up his Grace or his Lordship on his legs, Mr Tuft would softly break in by observing that such and such a point had been “admirably put in the debate by one of the speakers—he did not recollect whom;” and on being apprised of, and receiving a courteous bow from, the great man entitled to the undesigned compliment, look so surprised—almost, indeed, piqued! Carefully, however, as he managed matters, he was soon found out by men, and compelled to bestake himself, with tenfold ardour, to the women, with whom he lasted a little longer. They considered him a great literary man; for he could quote, and apparently criticise, a good deal of poetry, and ridicule many novels. He could show, that what everybody else admired, was full of faults; that what all condemned, was admirable: so that the fair creatures were forced to distrust their own judgment, in proportion as they deferred to his. He would allow no one to be entitled to the praise of literary excellence, except individuals of rank, and one or two men of established literary reputation, who had not thought it worth their while to repel his obsequious advances, or deemed it expedient to allow a scorpion to crawl over them without irritating it.—Then he would polish the poetry of fine ladies, touch up their little tales, and secure their insertion in fashionable periodicals. On these accounts, and of his blistering tittle-tattle, he was as welcome at certain soirées and conversaziones, as anchovy, toast, or broiled bones at the close of a debauch. All toadies hate one another; but his brethren both hated and feared Mr Tuft; for he was not only so successful himself, but possessed and used such engines for depressing them. He had hoped to suc-

ceed in being popped in, by one of his patrons, for a snug little borough; but the great man got tired of him, and turned him off, though the ladies of the family still secured him occasional access to the dinner-table. He did not, however, make a grateful return for such good-natured condescensions. Contemptible as he was, in personal appearance, he yet imagined himself possessed of attractions for the ladies, and converted their innocent and unsuspecting familiarities, emanating from those confident in their purity and elevation, into tokens of the ascendancy he had gained over them; and of which, with equal falsehood, folly, and presumption, he would afterwards boast pretty freely. Till this came, however, to be suspected and discovered, Mr Tuft visited a good many leading houses in town, and spent no inconsiderable portion of each autumn at some one or other of the country mansions of his patrons—from whose “castles,” “halls,” “abbeys,” “priories,” and “seats,” he took great pride in dating his letters to his friends. I must not forget to mention that he kept a book, gorgeously bound and embellished, with silver-gilt clasps, and bearing on the back the words—“Book of Autographs;” which, to any one’s eyes but his own, read thus:—“Trophies of Toadyism.” This book contained autograph notes of the leading nobility, addressed familiarly to himself, thus:—

“The Duke of Walworth presents his compliments To Mr Tuft, and feels particularly obliged by,” &c.

“The Duchess of Diamond hopes Mr Tuft will not forget to bring with him, this evening, the recipe he mentioned the other day for sick canaries.”

“The Marquis of M—— has the honour to assure Mr Tuft that he did not feel disposed to take offence at Mr T.’s certainly somewhat free observations the other night.”

“Dear Mr Tuft,

“Why were you not at Spoon-Meat House last night? We were dread-

fully dull without you! X—— just as stupid as you always say he is."

[This was from a pretty and fashionable countess, whose initials it bore.]

"If Mr Tuft is dead, Lady Dulcimer requests to be informed when his funeral will take place, as she, together with a host of mourners, intends to show him a last mark of respect."

"Dear Mr Tuft,

"The poodle you brought me has got the mange, or some horrid complaint or other, which is making all his hair fall off. Do come and tell me what is to be done. Where can I send the sweet suffering angel?"—
Yours,

ARABELLA D——."

[This was from the eldest and loveliest daughter of a duke.]

"The Lord Chancellor presents his compliments to Mr Venom Tuft, and begs to acknowledge the receipt of his obliging present of his little '*Essay on Greatness*.'"

These are samples, taken at random, of the contents of Mr Tuft's Book of Autographs, evidencing abundantly the satisfactory terms of intimacy upon which he lived with the great; and it was ecstasy to him, to see this glittering record of his triumphs glanced over by the envious admiring eyes of those in his own station in society. How he delighted to be asked about the sayings and doings of the exclusive circles! How confidentially would he intimate the desperate condition of a sick peer—an expected *éclaircissement* of some fashionable folly and crime—or a move to be made in the Upper House that evening!—poor Tuft little suspecting, lying so snug in his shell of self-conceit, how frequently he fell, on these occasions, among the Philistines—and was, unconsciously to himself, being trotted out by a calm sarcastic hypocrite, for the amusement of the standers-by, just as a little monkey is poked with a stick to get up and exhibit himself and his tricks. Such was Mr Tuft, a great friend and admirer of "the Marquis," through whose influence he had procured the invitation from Titmouse,

in virtue of which he was now dressing in a nice little room at the back of the Hall, overlooking the stables; being bent upon improving his already tolerably familiar acquaintance with the Earl of Dredlington and Lady Cecilia, and also extracting from the man whose hospitality he was enjoying, materials for merriment among his great friends, against the next season.

When the party had collected in the drawing-room in readiness for dinner, you might have seen Mr Tuft in earnestly respectful conversation with the Lady Cecilia: Mr Gammon standing talking to Miss Macspleuchan, with an air of courteous ease and frankness—having observed her sitting neglected by everybody; the Earl conversing now with the Marquis, then with Titmouse, and anon with Tuft, with whom he appeared to be particularly pleased. Happening at length to be standing near Gammon—a calm, gentlemanlike person of whom he knew nothing, nor suspected that his keen eye had taken in his lordship's true character and capacity at a glance; nor that he would, in a few hours' time, acquire as complete a mastery over his said lordship, as ever the present famous *hippodamist* at Windsor,* by touching a nerve in the mouth of a horse, reduces him to helpless docility and submission—the Earl and he fell into casual conversation for a moment or two. The air of deference with which Gammon received the slight advances of the great man, was exquisite and indescribable. It gave him clearly to understand that his lofty pretensions were known to, and profoundly appreciated by, the individual whom he was addressing. Gammon said but little: that little, however, how significant and decisive! He knew that the Earl would presently inquire of Titmouse who the unknown visitor was; and that on being told, in the conceited and pro-

* About the time when this was originally written, there was a person who, chiefly at Windsor, occasioned much surprise and curiosity by the power which he appeared to exercise over horses, by touching, as he alleged, a particular nerve within the mouth.

bably disparaging manner which Gammon knew Titmouse would adopt, if he supposed it would please the Earl, that, "it was only Mr Gammon, one of his solicitors," he should sink at once and for ever beneath the notice of the Earl. He resolved, therefore, to anticipate—to contrive that it should ooze out easily and advantageously from himself, so that he could see the effect it had upon the Earl, and regulate his movements accordingly. Gammon, in short, sat down before the fortress of the Earl's pride, resolved that, for all it appeared inaccessible and impregnable, it should fall, however his skill and patience might be taxed in the siege. Till he had cast his piercing eye upon the Earl, Gammon had felt a little of the nervousness which one may imagine would be experienced by Van Amburgh, who, on being called into the presence of majesty to give a specimen of his skill upon an animal concealed from him, of whose name and qualities he was ignorant—should summon all his terrors into his eye, and string his muscles to their highest tension; and, on the door being opened, turn with smiling scorn, if not indignation, from a sucking pig, a calf, an ass, or a chicken. Something similar were the feelings experienced by Gammon, as soon as he had scanned the countenance and figure of the Earl of Dredlington. He quickly perceived that the dash of awe which he had thrown into his manner was producing its due effect upon that magnificent old simpleton. Watching his opportunity, he gently introduced the topic of the recent change of ownership which Yatton had undergone; and in speaking of the manner in which Mr Titmouse had borne his sudden prosperity—"Yes, my lord," continued Gammon, with apparent carelessness, "I recollect making some such observation to him, and he replied, 'very true, *Mr Gammon*.'"—Gammon finished his sentence calmly; but he perceived that the Earl had withdrawn himself into his earldom. He had given a very slight start; a little colour had

mounted into his cheek; a sensible hauteur had been assumed, and by the time that Gammon had done speaking, the physical space between them had been, as Lord Dredlington imagined, unobservedly, increased by two or three inches. Gammon was a *man*—an able and a proud man—and he felt galled; but, "let it pass," he presently reflected—"let it pass, you pompous old idiot; I will one day make you pay this debt with heavy interest." The Earl separated from him, Gammon regarding him as a gaudy craft sheering off for awhile, but doomed to be soon sunk. Mr Tuft, who was the son of a respectable retired tobacconist, having ascertained that Gammon was only Mr Titmouse's attorney, conducted himself for awhile as though there were no such person in the room; but being a quick observer, and catching once or twice the faint sarcastic smile which flickered over Mr Gammon's lips, while his keen eye was settled on him, he experienced a galling and uneasy consciousness of his presence.

The Marquis's superior tact and perception of character led him to treat Gammon differently—with a deference, and anxiety to please him, which Gammon understood thoroughly—in fact, he and the Marquis had many qualities in common, but Gammon was the man of *power*. During dinner he sat beside Miss Macspleuchan, and was almost the only person who spoke to her—in fact, he said but little to any one else. He took wine with Titmouse with a marked, but guarded air of confidence. The Marquis took wine with Gammon with a studied appearance of courtesy. The Earl's attention was almost entirely engrossed by Mr Tuft, who sat next to him, chattering in his ear, like a little magpie perched upon his shoulder. The Marquis sat next to the Lady Cecilia; for whose amusement, as far as his cautious tact would allow him, he from time to time drew out their little host. At length, in answer to a question by the Marquis, the Earl let fall some pompous obser-

vation, from which the Marquis, who was getting tired of the vapid monotony which pervaded the table, ventured to differ pretty decisively. Tuft instantly sided with the Earl, and spoke with infinite volubility for some minutes. Gammon saw, in a moment, that he was an absurd pretender; and watching his opportunity, for the first time that they had interchanged a syllable, with one word exposing a palpable historical blunder of poor Tuft's, overthrew him as completely as a bullet from a crossbow dislodges a tomtit from the wall on which he is hopping about, unconscious of his danger. 'Twas a thing about which there could be no mistake whatever.

"That's a *settler*, Tuft," said the Marquis drily, after a pause; Tuft reddened violently, and gulped down a glass of wine; and presently, with the slightly staggered Earl, became a silent listener to the discussion into which the Marquis and Gammon had entered. Obtuse as was the Earl, Gammon contrived to let him see how effectually he was supporting his lordship's opinion, which Mr Tuft had so ridiculously failed in doing. The Marquis got slightly the worst of the encounter with Gammon, whose object he saw, and whose tact he admired; and with much judgment permitted Gammon to appear to the Earl as his successful defender, in order that he might himself make a friend of Gammon. Moreover, he was not at all annoyed at witnessing the complete and unexpected discomfiture of poor Tuft, whom, for all his intimacy with that gentleman, the Marquis thoroughly despised.

However it might possibly be that his grand visitors enjoyed themselves, it was far otherwise with Mr Titmouse; who, being compelled to keep sober, was quite miserable. None of those around him were drinking men; —and the consequence was, that he would retire early to his bedroom, and amuse himself with brandy-and-water, and cigars, leaving his guests to amuse themselves with cards, billiards, or otherwise, as best they might. He did, indeed, "stand like

a cipher in the great account;" instead of feeling himself the Earl of Dreddlington's host, he felt himself as one of his lordship's inferior guests, struggling in vain against the freezing state and etiquette which the Earl carried with him wherever he went, like a sort of atmosphere. In this extremity he secretly clung to Gammon, and reposed upon his powerful support and sympathy more implicitly than ever he had done before. As the shooting season had commenced, and game was plentiful at Yatton, the Marquis and Tuft found full occupation during the day, as occasionally did Mr Gammon. Mr Titmouse once accompanied them; but having contrived nearly to blow his own hand off, and perform a corresponding good turn to the eyes of the Marquis, it was intimated to him that he had better go out alone for the future—as he did accordingly, but soon got tired of such solitary sport. Besides—hares, pheasants, partridges—old and young, cock or hen—'twas all one—none seemed to care one straw for him or his gun, let him pop and blaze away as loud and as long, as near or as far off, as he liked. The only thing he hit, and that plump, was one of his unfortunate dogs, which he killed on the spot; and then coming up with it, stamped upon the poor creature's bleeding carcass, saying with a furious oath—"Why didn't you keep out of the way, then, you brute?"

The Earl was really anxious to perform his promise of introducing, or procuring introduction for Titmouse, to the leading nobility and gentry of the county; but it proved a more difficult task than his lordship had anticipated—for Titmouse's early doings at Yatton had not yet been forgotten. Some of the haughty Whig gentry joined with their Tory neighbours in manifesting their open contempt and dislike for one who could so disgrace the name and station to which he had been elevated in the county; and the Earl had to encounter one or two somewhat mortifying rebuffs, in the course of his efforts for the establishment of his young kinsman. There

were some, however, whom mere political considerations — others, whom deference for the Earl's rank, and unwillingness to hurt his feelings—induced to receive the new Squire of Yatton on a footing of formal intimacy and equality; so that his lordship's dignified exertions were not entirely useless. The whole party at the Hall attended the Earl to church on the Sundays—entirely filling the Squire's pew and the adjoining one; their decorous conduct presenting a very edifying spectacle to the humble congregation, and suggesting a striking contrast between the present, and the former, visitors of Mr Titmouse. Worthy Dr Tatham was asked several times to dinner, at the Earl's instance; by whom he was treated on such occasions with great, though stately, courtesy. The only persons with whom the little Doctor felt at his ease, were Mr Gammon and Miss Macspleuchan, who treated him with the utmost cordiality and respect. What became, during the day of the two ladies, I hardly know. There was no instrument at Yatton: bagatelle-board, and novels from a circulating library at York, frequent rides and drives through the grounds and about the country, and occasional visits to and from one or two families with whom Lady Cecilia had a town acquaintance, occupied their day; and in the evening, a rubber at whist, or ecarté, with the Earl — sometimes, too, with the Marquis and Mr Tuft, both of whom lost no opportunity of paying marked attention to Lady Cecilia, with a view of dissipating as far as possible the inevitable *ennui* of her situation — would while away the short evenings, very early hours being now kept at the Hall. 'Twas wonderful that two such men as the Marquis and Mr Tuft could stay so long as they did at so dull a place, and with such dull people. Inwardly, they both voted the Earl an insufferable old twaddler; his daughter a piece of languid insipidity; and one would have thought it daily more irksome for them to keep up their courtly attentions. They had, however, respectively, as may presently be seen, objects of their own in view.

As Gammon, a little to the Earl's surprise, continued apparently a permanent guest at the Hall, where he seemed ever engaged in superintending and getting into order the important affairs of Mr Titmouse, it could hardly be but that he and the Earl should be occasionally thrown together; for as the Earl did not shoot, and never read books, even had there been any to read, he had little to do, when not engaged upon the expeditions I have alluded to, but saunter about the house and grounds, and enter into frivolous, but solemn and formal, conversation with almost any one he met. The assistance which Gammon had rendered to the Earl, on the occasion of their first meeting at dinner, had not been forgotten by his lordship, but had served to take off the edge from his preconceived contemptuous dislike for that gentleman. Gammon, however, steadily kept in the background, resolved, like a patient and skilful general, that all advances should come from the Earl. When, once or twice, his lordship inquired, with what Gammon saw to be only an affected carelessness, into the state of Mr Titmouse's affairs, Mr Gammon evinced a courteous readiness to give him *general* information; but with an evident caution and anxiety, not unduly to expose, even to the Earl—to Mr Titmouse's distinguished kinsman—the state of his property. He would, however, disclose sufficient to demonstrate his zeal and ability on behalf of Mr Titmouse's interests, his consummate qualifications as a man of business; and from time to time perceived that the display was not lost upon the Earl. Mr Gammon's anxiety, in particular, to prevent the borough of Yatton from being a second time wrested out of the hands of its proprietor, and returning, by a corrupt and profligate arrangement with Ministers, a Tory to Parliament, gave the Earl peculiar satisfaction. He was led by the mention of this topic into a long conversation with Mr Gammon upon political matters; and, at its close, was greatly struck with the soundness of his views, the decision and strength of his liberal

opinions, and the vigour and acuteness with which he had throughout agreed with every word the Earl had said, and fortified every position he had taken; evincing, at the same time, a profound appreciation of his lordship's luminous exposition of political principles. The Earl was forced to own to himself, that he had never before met with a man of Mr Gammon's strength of intellect, whose views and opinions had so intimately and entirely coincided—were, indeed, identical with his own. 'Twas delightful to witness them upon these occasions—to observe the air of reverence and admiration with which Gammon listened to the lessons of political wisdom which fell, with increasing length and frequency, from the lips of his lordship.

Nor was it only when they were alone together that Gammon would thus sit at the feet of Gamaliel; he was not ashamed to do so openly at the dinner-table: but, ah! how delicately and dexterously did he conceal from the spectators the game he was playing—more difficult to do so, though it daily became—because the more willing Gammon was to receive, the more eager was the Earl to communicate, instruction! If, on any of these occasions, oppressed by the multifariousness of his knowledge, and its sudden overpowering confluence, he would pause in the midst of a little series of half-formed sentences, Gammon would be at hand, to glide in easily, and finish what the Earl had begun, out of the Earl's ample and rich materials, of which Gammon had caught a glimpse, and only worked out the Earl's own, somewhat numerous, but abortive illustrations. The Marquis and Mr Tuft began, however, at length to feel a little impatient at observing the way which Gammon was making with the Earl; but of what use interference?—Gammon was an exceedingly awkward person to meddle with; for, having once got fair play, by gaining the Earl's ear, his accuracy, readiness, extent of information upon political topics, and admirable temper, told powerfully against his two opponents, who at length interfered less and less

with him; the Marquis only feeling pique, but Tuft also showing it. Had it been otherwise, indeed, with the latter gentleman, it would have been odd; for Gammon seemed to feel a peculiar pleasure in demolishing him. The Marquis, however, once resolved to show Gammon how distinctly he perceived his plan of operations, by waiting till he had accompanied the poor Earl up to a climax of absurdity; and then, with his eye on Gammon, bursting into gentle laughter. Seldom had Gammon been more ruffled than by that well-timed laugh; for he felt found out!

When the Earl and his astute companion were alone, however, the latter would listen, with lively interest, over and over again, never wearied, to his lordship's magnificent accounts of what he had intended to do, had he only continued in office, in the important department over which he had presided, viz. the Board of Green Cloth; and more than once put his lordship into a soft flutter of excitement, by hinting at rumours which, he said, were rife—that, in the event of a change of ministers, which was looked for, his lordship was to be President of the Council. "Sir," the Earl would say, "I should not shrink from the performance of my duty to my sovereign, to whatever post he might be pleased to call me. The one you mention, sir, has its peculiar difficulties; and if I know anything of myself, sir, it is one for which—I should say—I am peculiarly qualified. Sir," would go on the poor old Earl to his wicked listener, "the duty of presiding over the deliberations of powerful minds, requires signal discretion and dignity, because, in short, especially in affairs of state—a—a—Do you comprehend me, Mr Gammon?"

"I understand your lordship to say, that where the occasion is one of such magnitude, and the disturbing forces are upon so vast a scale, to moderate and guide conflicting interests and opinions"—

"Sir, it is so; *tantus componere lites, hic labor, hoc opus,*" interrupted the Earl, with a desperate attempt to fish up a fragment or two of his early scholar-

ship; and his features wore for a moment a solemn commanding expression, which satisfied Gammon of the sway which his lordship would have had when presiding at the council-board. Gammon would also occasionally introduce the subject of heraldry, asking many anxious questions con-

cerning that exalted science, and also respecting the genealogies of leading members of the peerage, with which he safely presumed that the Earl would be, as also he proved, perfectly familiar; and his lordship would go on for an hour at once upon these interesting and truly instructive subjects.

CHAPTER VII.

MR GAMMON AND THE EARL OF DREDDLINGTON.—SAPPING AND MINING.

SHORTLY after luncheon one day, of which only Gammon, the Earl, and the two ladies, were in the Hall to partake, Mr Gammon had occasion to enter the drawing-room, where he found the Earl sitting upon the sofa, with his massive gold spectacles on, leaning over the table, engaged in the perusal of a portion of a work then in course of periodical publication, and which had only that morning been delivered at the Hall. The Earl asked Mr Gammon if he had seen it, and was answered in the negative.

"Sir," said the Earl, rising and removing his glasses, "it is a remarkably interesting publication, showing considerable knowledge of a difficult and all-important subject, and one, in respect of which the lower orders of the people in this country—nay, I lament to be obliged to add, the great bulk of the middle classes also, are woefully deficient—I mean heraldry, and the history of the origin, progress, and present state of the families of the old nobility and gentry of this country." The work which had been so fortunate as thus to meet with the approbation of the noble and august critic was the last monthly number of a History of the County of York, of which, as yet, only thirty-eight seven-and-sixpenny quarto numbers had made their appearance. It formed an admirable and

instructive publication, every number of which had contained a glorification of some different Yorkshire family, derived from information supplied by themselves in sacred confidence, and founded on fabulous family archives, of inconceivable antiquity. The discriminating patronage of Mr Titmouse for this inestimable performance, had been secured by a most obsequious letter from the learned editor—but more especially by a device of his in the last number, which it would have been strange indeed if it could have failed to catch the eye, and interest the feelings, of the new aristocratical owner of Yatton. Opposite to an engraving of the Hall, was placed a magnificent genealogical tree, surmounted by a many-quartered shield of armorial bearings, both of which purported to be an accurate record of the ancestral glories of the house of "TITMOUSE OF YATTON!" A minute investigation might indeed have detected that the recent flight of *Titmice* perched on the lower branches of this imposing pedigree, bore nearly as small a proportion to the long array of chivalrous Drelincourts and Dredgings constituting the massive trunk, as did the paternal coat (to which the profound research and ingenuity of Sir GORGEOUS TINTACK, the Garter king-at-arms, had succeed-



The Crest and Coat of Arms of
TITLEBAT TITMOUSE, ESQ., M.P.,
ACCORDING TO THE DESCRIPTION OF
Sir Georgeus Cimack, Garter King at Arms.

ed in demonstrating theinalienable right of Titmouse) to the interminable series of quarterings, derived from the same source, occupying the remainder of the escococheon.* At these mysteriously significant symbols, however, Mr. Titmouse, though quite ready to believe that they indicated some just cause or other of family pride, had looked with the same appreciating intelligence which you may fancy you see a chicken displaying, while hesitatingly clapping its foot upon, and quaintly cocking its eye at, a slip of paper lying in a yard, covered over with algebraic characters and calculations. Far otherwise, however, was it with the Earl, in whose eyes the complex and recondite character of the production infinitely enhanced its value, and struck in his bosom several deep chords of genealogical feeling, as he proceeded, in answer to various anxious inquiries of Gammon, to give him a full and minute account of the

* Per bend Ermine and Pern, two Lions rampant combatant, counter-changed, armed and langued Gules; surmounted by three bendlets undee Argent, on each three fleur-de-lis Azure; on a chief Or, three TITMICE volant proper; all within a bordure gobonated Argent and Sable.

CREST.—On a cap of maintenance a Titmouse proper, ducally gorged Or, holding in his beak a woodlouse embowed Azure. Motto—“*Je le tiens.*”

Note.—The Author was favoured, on the first appearance of this portion of the work, with several complimentary communications on the subject of Sir Gorgeous Tintack's feats in heraldry: and one gentleman—Mr Charles Winston, an accomplished legal friend, and former pupil of the Author,—eminent in that science, and to whom the author is indebted for the annexed drawing, has requested the author to annex to the separate edition, as he now does, the two following curiose extracts from old heraldic writers;—the first, supporting the author's ridicule of the prevalent folly of devising complicated coats of arms; and the second being a remarkable specimen of the extent to which an enthusiast in the science was carried on its behalf.

First—“An other thing that is amisse, as I take it, and hath great neede to be reformed, is the quartering of many markes in one shield, coate, or banner; for sithence it is true that such markes serue to no other use, but for a commander to lead by, or to be known by, it is of necessitie that the eams should be *apparent, faire, and easie to be understood;* so that the quartering of many of them together, doth hinder the vss for which they are provided.—As how is it possible for

unrivalled splendour and antiquity of his lordship's ancestry. Now be it understood that Gammon—while prosecuting the researches which had preceded the elevation of Mr Titmouse to that rank and fortune of which the united voice of the fashionable world had now pronounced him so eminently worthy—had made himself pretty well acquainted with the previous history and connections of that ancient and illustrious house, of which the Earl of Dredlington was the head; and his familiarity with this topic, though it did not surprise the Earl, because he conceived it to be every one's duty to acquaint himself with such momentous matters, rapidly raised Gammon in the good opinion of his lordship: to whom at length it occurred to view him in quite a new light—viz. as the chosen instrument by whose means, under Providence, the perverse and self-willed Aubrey had been righteous-ly cast down from that high place,

a plaine unlearned man to discover and know a sunder, six or eight—sometimes thirty or forty several marks clustered altogether in one shield or banner, nay, though he had as good skill as Robert Gloscer, late Somerset that dead ie, and the eies of an egle, amongst such a confusion of things, yet should he never be able to deciper the errors that are dale committed in this one point, nor discover or know one banner or standard from another, be the same neuuer so large!”—*Treatise on the True Use of Armes*—by Mr Sampson Eyrewick, [a famous antiquary in the reign of Queen Elizabeth.]

[Secondly.—An extract from the *Book of St Alban's*, written late in the fifteenth century, by Dame Juliana Berners, Abbess of St Alban's.]

“Cain and all his offspring became *churls* both by the curse of God, and his own father. Seth was made a *gentleman*, through his father and mother's blessing, from whose loins issued *Noah*, a *gentleman* by kind and lineage. Of Noah's sons, *Chem* became a churl by his father's curse, on account of his gross barbarism towards his father. *Japhet* and *Shem*, Noah made gentlemen. From the offspring ofgentlemen Japhet came *Abraham*, *Moyses*, and the Prophets, and also the King of the right line of *Mary*, of whom that only absolute gentleman* Jesus was borne; perfite God and perfite man according to his manhood, King of the land of *Juda*, and the Jewes, and *gentleman* by his Mother *Mary*, princess of coate Armour.”

* One of our oldest dramatists speaks of our Sa-viour, in a very solemn sense, as the “first true gentle-man that ever lived.”

which his rebellious opposition to the wishes and political views of his liege lord had rendered him unworthy to occupy; while a more loyal branch had been raised from obscurity to his forfeited rank and estates. In fact, the Earl began to look upon Gammon as one, whom just regard for his lordship's transcendent position in the aristocracy of England, had led even to anticipate his lordship's possible wishes; and proceeded accordingly to rivet this spontaneous allegiance, by discoursing with condescending affability on the successive noble and princely alliances which had, during a long series of generations, refined the ancient blood of the Dredlingtonts into the sort of super-sublimated ichor* which at present flowed in his own veins. The progress of the Earl's feelings was watched with the greatest interest by Mr Gammon, who perceived the increasing extent to which respect for him was mingling with his lordship's sublime self-satisfaction; and, watching the opportunity, struck a spark into the dry tinder of his lordship's vain imagination, blew it gently—and saw that it caught and spread. Confident in his knowledge of the state of affairs, and that his lordship had reached the highest point of credulity, Gammon had the almost incredible audacity to intimate, in a hesitating but highly significant manner, his impression, that the recent failure in the male line of the princely house of HOCH-STIFFELHAUSEN NARRENSTEIN DUMMLEINBERG,† had placed his lordship, in right of the marriage of one of his ancestors, during the Thirty Years' War, with a princess of that august line, in a situation to claim, if such should be his lordship's pleasure, the dormant honours and

* “ πές δ' ἀμβοτον αἴμα
Ιχθὺς, δίσ τε τις πέι μαναεσσ Θεοῖς.”
Iliad, 5, 340.

† I vehemently suspect myself guilty of a slight anachronism here; this ancient and illustrious monarchy having been mediatised by the congress of Visnna in 1815—its territories now forming part of the parish of Hahnroost, in the kingdom of —.

sovereign rank attached to the possession of that important principality. The Earl appeared for a few moments transfixed with awe! The bare possibility of such an event seemed too much for him to realise; but when further conversation with Gammon had familiarised his lordship with the notion, his mind's eye involuntarily and naturally glanced to his old rival, the Earl of Fitz-Walter: what would he say to all this? How would his little honours pale beside the splendours of his Serene Highness the Prince of Hoch-Stiffelhausen Narrenstein Dummeinberg! He was not sorry when Mr Gammon, soon afterwards, left him to follow out unrestrainedly the swelling current of his thoughts, and yield himself up to the transporting ecstasies of anticipated sovereignty. To such a pitch did his excitement carry him, that he might shortly afterwards have been seen walking up and down the Elm Avenue, with the feelings, and the air, of an old KING.

Not satisfied, however, with the success of his daring experiment upon the credulity and inflammable imagination of the aspiring old nobleman—whom his suggestion had set upon instituting extensive inquiries into the position of the Dredlington family with reference to the foreign alliances which it had formed in times past, and of which so dazzling an incident might really be in existence—it occurred to Mr Gammon, on another occasion of his being left alone with the Earl, and who, he saw, was growing manifestly more pleased with the frequent recurrence of them, to sink a shaft into a new mine. He therefore, on mere speculation, introduced, as a subject of casual conversation, the imprudence of persons of rank and large fortune devolving the management of their pecuniary affairs so entirely upon others—and thus leaving themselves exposed to all the serious consequences of employing incompetent, indolent, or mercenary agents. Mr Gammon proceeded to observe that he had recently known an instance of a distinguished nobleman, ('whose name'

—oh, Gammon!—he ‘for very obvious reasons suppressed!’) who, having occasion to raise a large sum of money by way of mortgage, left the sole negotiation of the affair to an agent, who was afterwards proved to have been in league with the lender, (the mortgagee), and had permitted his employer to pay, for ten or twelve years, an excess of interest over that for which he might, had he chosen, have obtained the requisite loan, which actually made a difference in the distinguished borrower’s income of a thousand a-year! Here, looking out of the north-east corner of his eye, the placid speaker, continuing unmoved, observed the Earl start a little, glance somewhat anxiously at him, but in silence, and slightly quicken the pace at which he had been walking. Gammon presently added, in a careless sort of way, that accident had brought him into professional intercourse with that nobleman—[Oh, Gammon! Gammon!]—whom he was ultimately instrumental in saving from the annual robbery which was being inflicted upon him. It was enough; Gammon saw that what he had been saying had sunk like lead into the mind of his noble and acute companion, who, for the rest of the day, seemed burdened and oppressed with either it or some other cause of anxiety: and, from an occasional uneasy and wistful eye which the Earl fixed upon him at dinner, Gammon felt conscious that not long would elapse, before he should hear something from the Earl connected with the topic in question—and he was not mistaken. The next day they met in the park; and after one or two casual observations, the Earl remarked that, by the way, with reference to their yesterday’s conversation, it ‘did so happen’—very singularly—that the Earl had a friend who was placed in a situation very similar to that which had been mentioned by Mr Gammon to the Earl; it was a very intimate friend—and therefore the Earl would like to hear what was Mr Gammon’s opinion of the case. Gammon was scarcely able to refrain from a smile, as the Earl

went on, evincing every moment a more vivid interest in behalf of his shadowy ‘friend,’ who at last stood suddenly confessed as the Earl of Dredlington himself; for, in answer to a question of Mr Gammon, his lordship unwittingly spoke in the first person! On perceiving this, he got much confused; but Gammon passed it off easily; and by his earnest confidential tone and manner, soon soothed and reconciled the Earl to the vexatious disclosure he had made—vexatious only because the Earl had thought fit, so unnecessarily, to make a mystery of an everyday matter. He rather loftily enjoined Mr Gammon to secrecy upon the subject, to which Gammon readily pledged himself, and then they entered upon an unrestrained discussion of the matter. Suffice it to say, that in the end Gammon assured the Earl that he would, without any difficulty, undertake to procure a transfer of the mortgage at present existing on his lordship’s property, which should lower his annual payments by at least one and a half per cent: and which, on a rough calculation, would make a difference of nearly five hundred a-year in the Earl’s favour. But Gammon explicitly informed the Earl that he was not to suppose that he had been overreached, or his interests been in any way neglected, in the original transaction; that it had been conducted on his lordship’s behalf, by his solicitor, Mr Mudge, one of the most respectable men in the profession; and that a few years made all the difference in matters of this description; and before he, Mr Gammon, would interfere any further in the business, he requested his lordship to write to Mr Mudge, enclosing a draft of the arrangement proposed by Mr Gammon, and desiring Mr Mudge to say what he thought of it. This the Earl did; and in a few days’ time received an answer from Mr Mudge, to the effect that he was happy that there was a prospect of so favourable an arrangement as that proposed, to which he could see no objection whatever; and would co-operate with Mr Gammon

in any way, and at any time, which his lordship might point out. Mr Gammon was, in fact, rendering here a real and important service to the Earl ; being an able, acute, and energetic man of business—while Mr Mudge was nearly superannuated—had grown rich and indolent, no longer attending to his practice with pristine energy, but pottering and dozing over it, as it were, from day to day ; unable, from his antiquated style of doing business, and the constantly narrowing circle of his connections, to avail himself of the resources open to younger and more energetic practitioners. Thus, though money was now much more plentiful, and consequently to be got for a less sum than when, some ten years before, the Earl had been compelled to borrow a large amount upon mortgage, old Mr Mudge had suffered matters to remain all the while as they were ; and so they would have remained, but for Gammon's accidental interference : the Earl being not a man of business—ones who could not bear to allude to the fact of his property being mortgaged—who did not like even to think of it ; and concluded that good old Mr Mudge kept a sufficiently sharp eye upon his noble client's interest. The Earl gave Mr Mudge's letter to Mr Gammon, and requested him to lose no time in putting himself into communication with that gentleman, for the purpose of effecting the suggested transfer. This Gammon undertook to do ; and perceiving that he had fortunately made so strong a lodgment in the Earl's good opinion, whose interests now bound him, in a measure to Mr Gammon, that gentleman thought that he might safely quit Yatton and return to town, in order to attend to divers matters of pressing exigency. Before his departure, however, he had a long interview with Titmouse, in the course of which he gave that now submissive personage a few simple, perspicuous, and decisive directions, as to the line of conduct he was to pursue, and which alone could conduce to his permanent interests : enjoining him, moreover, to

pursue that line, on terror of the consequences of failing to do so. The Earl of Dredlington, in taking leave of Mr Gammon, evinced the utmost degree of cordiality consistent with the stateliness of his demeanour. He felt, in fact, real regret at parting with a man of such superior intellect—one evincing such a fascinating deference towards him ; and it glanced across his lordship's mind, that such a man as Mr Gammon would be the fittest man who could be thought of, in respect of tact, energy, and knowledge, to become prime minister to — his Serene Highness the Prince of Hoch-Stifelhausen Narrenstein Dummleinberg !

The longer that the Earl continued at Yatton—in which he could not have more thoroughly established himself if he had, in the ordinary way, engaged it for the autumn—the more he was struck with its beauties ; and the oftener they presented themselves to his mind's eye, the keener became his regrets at the chasm in the family interests which had so long existed, and his desire to take advantage of what seemed almost an opportunity, specially afforded by Providence, for re-uniting them. As the Earl took his solitary walks, he thought, with deep anxiety, of his own advanced age, and sensibly increasing feebleness. The position of his affairs was not satisfactory. When he died, he would leave behind him an only child—and that a daughter—on whom would devolve the splendid responsibility of sustaining, alone, the honours of her ancient family. Then there was his newly-discovered kinsman, Mr Titmouse, sole and unembarrassed proprietor of this fine old family property ; simple-minded and confiding, with a truly reverential feeling towards them, the heads of the family ; also the undoubted, undisputed proprietor of the borough of Yatton ; who entertained and avowed the same liberal and enlightened political opinions, which the Earl had ever maintained, with dignified consistency and determination ; and who, by a rare conjunction of personal merit, and of circumstance,

had been elevated to an unprecedented pitch of popularity, in the highest regions of society ; and who was, moreover, already next in succession, after himself and the Lady Cecilia, to the ancient barony of Drelincourt, and the estates annexed to it. How little was there, in reality, to set against all this ? An eccentricity of manner, for which nature only, if any one, was to blame ; a tendency to extreme modishness in dress ; a slight deficiency in the knowledge of the etiquette of society, which daily experience and intercourse were rapidly supplying ; and a slight disposition towards the pleasures of the table, which no doubt would disappear on the instant of his having an object of permanent and elevating attachment. Such was Mr Titmouse. He had as yet, undoubtedly, made no advances to Lady Cecilia, nor evinced any disposition to do so, though numerous and favourable had been, and continued to be, the opportunities for his doing so. Might not this, however, be set down entirely to the score of his excessive diffidence—distrust of his pretensions to aspire to so august an alliance as that with the Lady Cecilia ? Yet there certainly was another way of accounting for his conduct : had he got already entangled with an attachment elsewhere ?—Run after in society, as he had been, in a manner totally unprecedented during his very first season—had his affections been inveigled ?—When the Earl dwelt upon this dismal possibility, if it were when he was lying awake in bed, he would be seized with a fit of intolerable restlessness—and getting up, wrap himself in his dressing-gown, and pace his chamber for an hour together, running over, in his mind, the names of all the women he knew who would be likely to lay snares for Titmouse, in order to secure him for a daughter. Then there was the Lady Cecilia—but she, he knew, would not run counter to his wishes, and he had, therefore, no difficulty to apprehend on *that* score. She had ever been calmly submissive to his will ; had the same lofty sense of family dignity that he enjoyed ; and

had often concurred in his deep regrets on account of the separation of the family interests. She was still unmarried—and yet, on her father's decease, would be a peeress in her own right, and possessed of the family estates. The fastidiousness which alone, thought the Earl, had kept her hitherto single, would not, he felt persuaded, be allowed by her to interfere, for the purpose of preventing so excellent a family arrangement as would be effected by her union with Titmouse. Once married, and suitable settlements being secured from Titmouse—if there should prove to be any incompatibility of temper or discrepancy of disposition, come the worst to the worst, there was the shelter of a separation and separate maintenance to look to ; a thing becoming of daily occurrence ; which implied no real reproach to either party—and left them always at liberty to return to each other's society—when so disposed. And as for the dress and manners of Titmouse, granting them to be a little extravagant, would not, in all probability, a word from her suffice to dispel his fantastic vulgarity—to elevate him into a gentleman ? Thus thought her fond and enlightened parent, and thns—in point of fact—thought also she ; from which it is evident, that Titmouse, once brought to the point—made sensible where his duty and his privilege converged—it would be a straightforward plain-sailing business. To bring about so desirable a state of things as this—to give the young people an opportunity of thoroughly knowing and endearing themselves to each other, were among the objects which the Earl had proposed to himself, in accepting the invitation to Yatton. Time was wearing on, however, and yet no decisive step had been taken—Lady Cecilia's icy coldness—her petrifying indifference of manner, her phlegmatic temperament and lofty pride, were qualities, all of which were calculated rather to check than encourage the advances of a suitor, especially of such an one as Titmouse ; but, though the Earl did not know it,

there were others, as the privileged reader shall presently see, whose ardour and impatience to possess them-selves of such superior loveliness could not be similarly restrained or discouraged.

CHAPTER VIII.

LADY CECILIA AND HER THREE LOVERS; WITH HER FATHER'S MASTERLY DIPLOMACY IN FAVOUR OF ONE OF THEM.

WILL the reader find it difficult to believe, that Mr Venom Tuft, having been long on the look-out for—Heaven save the mark!—an aristocratic wife, had conceived it not impossible to engage the affections of Lady Cecilia—to fascinate her by the display of his brilliant acquirements; and that the comparative seclusion of Yatton would afford him the requisite opportunity for effecting his wishes? Yet even so it really was: intoxicated with vanity, which led him to believe himself peculiarly agreeable to women, he at length had the inconceivable folly and presumption, on the morning after an evening in which he fancied he had been displaying peculiar brilliance, to intimate to her, in faltering tones, that his affections were no longer under his own control, having been taken captive by her irresistible charms. Vain thought! as well might a cock-sparrow have sought to mate himself with the stately swan! It was for some time rather difficult for the Lady Cecilia to understand that he was seriously making her a proposal! At length, however, she comprehended him: evincing the utmost degree of genuine astonishment, which her drooping eyelids and languid hauteur of manner would permit her to manifest. When poor Tuft found that such was the case, his face burned like fire, and he felt in a state of inward collapse.

“You haven’t mistaken me for Miss Macspleuchan, Mr Tuft, have you?”

said Lady Cecilia with a faint smile, but in an ill-disguised tremor. You and Mr Titmouse, and the Marquis, I hear, sat much longer after dinner last night than usual!” Tuft was utterly confounded. Was her ladyship insinuating that he was under the influence of wine? He was for a while speechless.

“I assure you, Lady Cecilia”—at length he stammered.

“Oh—now I understand!—You are rehearsing for Lady Tawdry’s private theatricals? Do you play there next month? Well, I daresay you’ll make a delicious Romeo.” Here the Earl happening to enter, Lady Cecilia, with a languid smile, apprised him that Mr Tuft had been rehearsing, to admiration, a love-scene which he was studying for Lady Tawdry’s theatricals; on which the Earl, in a good-natured way, said that he should like to witness it, if not too much trouble to Mr Tuft. If that gentleman could have crept up the chimney without being observed, he would have employed the first moment of sooty repose and security, in praying that the Lady Cecilia might bring herself to believe, that he had really been doing what at present he feared she but affected to believe, viz. that he had been only playing at love-making. He resolved to outstay the Earl, who, indeed, withdrew in a few minutes’ time, having entered only for the purpose of asking Lady Cecilia a question; and on her ladyship and

her would-be lover being again alone—

"If I have been guilty of presumption, Lady Cecilia"—commenced Tuft with tremulous earnestness, looking a truly piteous object.

"Not the least, Mr Tuft," said she, calmly smiling; "or, even if you *have*, I'll forgive it on one condition"—

"Lady Cecilia has only to intimate"—

"That you will go through it all with Miss Macspleuchan; or, couldn't we get up a sweet scene with my maid? Annette is a pretty little thing, and her broken English"—

"Your ladyship is pleased to be exceedingly severe; but I feel that I deserve it. Still, knowing your good-nature, I will venture to ask one great favour, which, if you refuse, I will within an hour quit Yatton,—that you will, in mercy to my feelings, mention this little scene to no one."

"If you wish it, Mr Tuft, I will preserve your secret," she replied in a kinder and more serious manner than he had ever witnessed in her; and, when he had escaped into solitude, he could hardly tell whom he hated most—himself, or the Lady Cecilia. His self-conceit had been split asunder by the unexpected shock it had encountered.

Several days afterwards, the Marquis Gants-Jaunes de Millefleurs, purposing to quit Yatton on his way northward, sought a favourable opportunity to lay himself—the brilliant, irresistible Marquis—at the feet of the all-conquering Lady Cecilia, the future Lady Drelincourt, peeress in her own right, and mistress of the family estates. He had done the same kind of thing, half-a-dozen times, to as many women—all of them of ample fortune, and most of them also of rank. His manner was exquisitely delicate and winning; but Lady Cecilia, with a slight blush, (for she was really pleased), calmly refused him. He had quickness and tact enough, even at that very embarrassing moment, to see that it was utterly in vain, and for a few moments felt in an unutterably foolish position.

Quickly recovering himself, however, he assumed an air of delicate raillery, and put her into such good humour, that, forgetful, in the moment, of her promise to poor Tuft, she, in the 'strictest confidence in the world,' communicated to the Marquis the offer which Mr Tuft had been beforehand with him in making to her! The Marquis's cheek flushed and tingled; and, without being able to analyse what passed through his mind, the result may be stated, as having shaped itself into an intolerable feeling, that he and Tuft were a couple of sneaking adventurers, and worse—of ridiculous and exposed adventurers. For almost the first time in his life, he felt cast into such a quandary amid the momentary conflict of his thoughts and feelings, as kept him silent. At length, "I presume, Lady Cecilia," said he in a low tone, with an air of distress, and a glance which did more in his behalf with Lady Cecilia than a thousand of his most flattering and eloquent speeches, "that I shall, in like manner, afford amusement to your ladyship and Mr Tuft?"

"Sir," said she haughtily, and colouring—"Mr Tuft and the Marquis Gants-Jaunes de Millefleurs, are two very different persons. I am surprised, Monsieur le Marquis, that you should have made such an observation!"

Hereupon he felt greatly consoled, and perfectly secure against being exposed to Tuft, as poor little Tuft had been exposed to him. Yet he was mistaken. How can the reader forgive Lady Cecilia for her double breach of promise, when he is informed, that only a day or two afterwards, Tuft and she being thrown together, partly out of pity to her rejected and bitterly mortified suitor, partly from an impulse of womanly vanity, and partly from a sort of glimpse of even-handed justice requiring such a step, as a kind of reparation to Tuft for her exposure of him to the Marquis—she, 'in the strictest confidence,' however, informed him that his example had been followed by the Mar-

quis ; utterly forgetful of that excellent maxim, "begin nothing of which you have not well considered the end." It had not occurred to her ladyship, as being a thing almost certain to ensue upon her breach of faith, that Tuft would ask her whether she had violated *his* confidence. He did so : she blushed scarlet—and though, like her august papa, she could have equivocated when she could not have lied, here she was in a dilemma from which nothing but a fib could possibly extricate her ; and in a confident tone, but with a burning cheek, she told a falsehood ; and had, moreover, the pain of being conscious, by Mr Tuft's look, that he did not believe her.—Nothing could exceed the comical air of embarrassment of the Marquis and Mr Tuft, whenever, after this, they were alone together ! How fearful lest — how doubtful whether — each knew as much as the other !

To return, however, to the Earl of Dredlington, who was utterly in ignorance of the Marquis and Mr Tuft's proposals to Lady Cécilia, the difficulty which at present harassed his lordship was, how he could, without compromising his own dignity, or injuring his darling scheme by a premature development of his purpose, sound Titmouse upon the subject. How to break the ice—to broach the affair—was the great problem which the Earl turned over and over again in his mind. Now, be it observed, that when a muddle-headed man is called upon at length to act—however long beforehand he may have had notice of it—however assured he may have been of the necessity for eventually taking one course or another, and consequently, however ample the opportunity which has been enjoyed for consideration, he remains confused and irresolute up to the very last instant—when he acts, after all, merely as the creature of caprice and impulse ! 'Twas thus with Lord Dredlington. He had thought of half-a-dozen different ways of commencing with Titmouse, and decided upon adopting each ; yet, on the arrival of the anxiously looked for moment, he had

lost sight of them all, in his inward fluster and nervousness.

'Twas noon, and Titmouse, smoking a cigar, was walking slowly up and down, his hands stuck into his surtout pockets, and resting on his hips, in the fir-tree walk at the end of the garden—the spot to which he seemed, during the stay of his grand guests, to have been tacitly restricted for the enjoyment of the luxury in question. As soon as Titmouse was aware of the Earl's approach, he hastily tossed aside his cigar. The Earl "begged" he would take another ; and tried to calm and steady himself, by a moment's reflection upon his overwhelming superiority over Titmouse in every respect ; but it was in vain.

Now—to pause for a moment—what anxiety and embarrassment would not his lordship have been spared, had he been aware of one little fact ; viz. that Mr Gammon was, secretly and potently, his friend, in the great matter which lay so near to his heart ? For so, in truth, it was. He had used all the art he was master of, and availed himself of all his mysterious power over Titmouse, to get him to make, at all events, an advance to his distinguished kinswoman. Considering, however, how necessary it was "to be off with the old love before he was on with the new," he had commenced operations by satisfying Titmouse how vain and hopeless, and, indeed, unworthy of him, was his passion for poor Miss Aubrey ! Here, however, Gammon had not so much difficulty to contend with as he had anticipated ; for Miss Aubrey's image had been long ago jostled out of Titmouse's recollection, by the innumerable brilliant and fashionable women among whom he had been latterly thrown. When, therefore, Gammon veraciously informed him that Miss Aubrey had lost all her beauty, and—poor Kate !—fallen into a decline ! and that, moreover, when he (Gammon) had, according to his promise to Titmouse, taken an opportunity of pressing his wishes upon her, she had scouted the bare notion of such a thing with utter scorn !

" 'Pon—my—soul! The—devil—she did!" said Titmouse, with an air of insolent astonishment. "The gal'a a devilish pretty gal—or at least was—no doubt," he preantly continued, knocking the ashes off his cigar with an indifferent air; "but—it's too good a joke—'pon my soul it is; but d'ye think, Gammon, she ever supposed I meant marriage? What! to a beggar? By Jove!"—Here he winked his eye at Gammon, and then slowly expelled a mouthful of smoke. Gammon had grown pale with the conflict excited within him, by the last words of the execrable little miscreant. He controlled his feelings, however, and succeeded in preserving silence.

"Ah—well!" continued Titmouse, after another whiff or two, with an air of commiseration, "if the poor gal's *booked* for kingdom come—eh? it's no use; there's no harm done. Deuced poor, all of 'em, I hear! It's a devilish hard, by the way, Gammon, that the prettieat gals are always the soonest picked off for the churchyard!" As soon as Gammon had completely mastered his feelings, he proceeded to excite the pride and ambition of Titmouse, by expatiating upon the splendour of an alliance with the last representative of the elder branch of so ancient and illustrious a house as that of Dredlington; in fact, when Gammon came, he said, to think of it, he feared it was *too* grand a stroke, and that Lady Cecilia would not entertain the notion for a moment. He told Titmouse that she had refused crowds of young lords: that she would be a peeress of the realm in her own right, with an independent income of £5000 a-year; and have mansions, seats, and castles, in each of the four quarters of the kingdom! Topics such as these excited and inflated Titmouse to the full extent desired by Mr Gammon; who, moreover, with great solemnity of manner, gave him distinctly to understand, that on his being able to effect an alliance with the Lady Cecilia, absolutely depended his continuance in, or expulsion from, the possession of the whole Yatton property! Thus it came to pass, that Titmouse was

penetrated by a far keener desire to ally himself to the Lady Cecilia, than ever the Earl had experienced to bring about such an auspicious event; and at the very moment of Titmouse's catching sight of the Earl, while pacing up and down the fir-tree walk, inhaling the soothing influence of his cigar—as I a short time ago presented him to the reader—he was tormenting himself with apprehensions that such a prize was too splendid for him to draw, and asking himself the constantly recurring question, how, in the name of all that was funny, could he set the thing a-going? When Greek met Greek, then came—it was said—the tug of war: and when the Earl of Dredlington and Titmouse—a great fool and a little fool—an old, and a young one—came to meet each other, impelled by the same wishes, and restrained by similar apprehensions, it was like the encounter of two wily diplomats, sitting down with the intention of outwitting each other, in obtaining an object, in respect of which their aim was, in fact—unknown to each other—precisely coincident: this hidden coincidence being the exact point which their exquisite manœuvres had succeeded in reciprocally masking: it being quite possible for Talleyrand and Pozzo di Borgo, thus pitted against each other, to have separated, after a dozen long conferences, each having failed to secure their common object—peace.

"Well, Mr Titmouse"—commenced the Earl blandly, stepping at once, with graceful boldness, out of the mist, confusion, and perplexity which prevailed amongst his lordship's ideas, few as they were—"what are you thinking about?—For you seem to be thinking!" and a courteous little laugh accompanied the last words.

"'Pon—'pon my life—I—I—*beg* your lordship's pardon—but it's—monstrous odd your lordship should have known it"—stammered Titmouse; and his face suddenly grew of a scarlet colour.

"Sir," replied the Earl, with greater skill than he had ever evinced in his whole life before—(such is the effect of any one's being intensely in earnest)

—“it is not at all odd, when it happens that—the probability is—that—we are, perhaps—mind, sir, I mean possibly—thinking about the same thing !” Titmouse grew more and more confused, gazing in silence, with a strange simpering stare, at his noble companion, who, with his hands joined behind him, was walking slowly along with Titmouse.

“Sir,” continued the Earl in a low tone—breaking a somewhat awkward pause—“it gives me sincere satisfaction to assure you, that I can fully appreciate the delicate embarrassment in which I perceive you are now”—

“My lord—your lordship’s most uncommon polite”—quoth Titmouse, suddenly taking off his hat, and bowing low. The Earl moved his hat also, and slightly bowed, with a proudly gratified air; and again occurred a little pause, which was broken by Titmouse.

“Then your lordship thinks—a—a—that—it will do?” he inquired sheepishly, but anxiously.

“Sir, I have the honour to assure you, that as far as *I* am concerned, I see no obst”—

“Yes—but excuse me, my lord—your lordship sees—I mean—my lord, your lordship sees—doesn’t your lordship?”

“Sir, I think—nay, I believe I do”—interrupted the Earl, wishing to relieve the evident embarrassment of his companion—“but—I see—nothing that should—alarm you.”

[How interesting to watch the mysterious process by which these two powerful minds were gradually approximating towards understanding each other! ’Twas a sort of *equation* with an unknown quantity, in due course of elimination!]

“Doesn’t your lordship, indeed?” inquired Titmouse, rather briskly.

“Sir, it was a saying of one of the great—I mean, sir, it is—you must often have heard, sir—in short, nothing venture, nothing have!”

“I’d venture a precious deal, my lord, if I only thought I could get what *I’m* after!”

“Sir?” exclaimed the Earl, condescendingly.

“If your lordship would only be so particular—so uncommon kind—as to name the thing to her ladyship—by way of—eh, my lord? A sort of breaking the ice, and all that”—

“Sir, I feel, and have a just pride in assuring you, that the Lady Cecilia is a young lady of that superior delicacy of”—

“But does your lordship really think I’ve a ghost of a chance?” interrupted Titmouse, anxiously. “She must have named the thing to your lordship, no doubt—eh, my lord?”

This queer notion of the young lady’s delicacy a little staggered her distinguished father for a moment or two. What was he to say? She and he had really often named the thing to each other; and here the question was put to him plumply. The Earl scorned a flat lie, and, as I recently intimated, never condescended to equivocation except when it was absolutely necessary.

“Sir,” he said hesitatingly; “undoubtedly—if I were to say—that now and then, when your attentions have been so pointed”—

“Pon my life, my lord, I never meant it; if your lordship will only believe me,” interrupted Titmouse, earnestly; “I beg a thousand pardons—I mean no harm, my lord.”

“Sir, there is no harm done,” said the Earl kindly. “Sir, I know human nature too well, or I have lived thns long to little purpose, not to be aware that we are not always master of our own feelings.”

“That’s exactly it, my lord! Excuse me, but your lordship’s hit the thing off to a T, as folks say!”

“Do not imagine, Mr Titmouse, that I think your attentions may have been unpleasant to the Lady Cecilia—by no means; I cannot, with truth, say any such thing!”

“Oh, my lord!” exclaimed Titmouse, taking off his hat, bowing, and placing his hand upon his breast, where his little heart was palpitating with unusual force and distinctness.

“Faint heart, says the proverb, Mr Titmouse, ah ha!” quoth the Earl with gentle gaiety.

"Yes, my lord, it's enough to make one faint indeed! Now, if your lordship—(I'm not used to this sort of thing, my lord)—would just make a sort of beginning for me, my lord, with the Lady Cicely, to set us going my lord—the least shove would do, my lord—because, my lord, *courtship's* a very—a—a"—

"Well, Mr Titmouse," said the Earl with a gracious smile, "since your modesty is so overpowering—I'll try—to become your ambassador to the Court of Cupid, ah ha!—to the Lady Cecilia. If, Mr Titmouse," his lordship presently added, in a serious tone, "you are fortunate enough to succeed in engaging the affections of the Lady Cecilia, you will discover that you have secured indeed an invaluable prize."

"To be sure, my lord! And consider, too, her ladyship's uncommon high rank—it's so particular condescending.—By the way, my lord, will she—if she and I can hit it off, so as to marry one another—be called *Mrs Titmouse*, or shall I be called *Lord Titmouse*? I wonder how that will be, my lord? 'Tis only, your lordship understands, on Lady Cicely's account I ask, because it's, in course, all one to *me* when once we're married."

The Earl was gazing at him as he went on, with an expression of mingled surprise and concern: presently, however, he added with calm seriousness, "Sir, it is not an unreasonable question, though I should have imagined that you could hardly—be—but—in short, the Lady Cecilia will retain her rank, and become the Lady Cecilia Titmouse—that is, during my life; but on my demise, she succeeds to the barony of Drelincourt, and then will be called, of course, Lady Drelincourt."

"And what shall *I* be called then, my lord?" inquired Titmouse eagerly. "Sir, you will of course continue Mr Titmouse"—

"Pon my life, my lord—shall I indeed?" he interrupted, with a crest-fallen air, "must we be called Mr Titmouse and Lady Drelincourt? Ex-

cuse me, my lord, but it don't sound at all like man and wife."

"Sir, so it always has been, and will be, and so it ever ought to be," replied the Earl gravely.

"Well, but, my lord, (excuse me, my lord)—but marriage is a very serious thing, my lord, your lordship knows"—

"It is, sir, indeed," replied the Earl, gloom visibly overspreading his features.

"Suppose," continued Titmouse, "Lady Cicely should die before me?"

The Earl, remaining silent, fixed on Titmouse the eye of a FATHER—a father, though a foolish one; and presently, with a sensible tremor in his voice, replied, "Sir, these are rather singular questions—but," he paused for some moments—"in such a mournful contingency as the one you have hinted at"—

"Oh, my lord! I humbly beg pardon—of course, I should be, 'pon my soul, my lord, most uncommon sorry"—interrupted Titmouse, with a little alarm in his manner.

"I was saying, sir—that in such an event, if Lady Drelincourt left no issue, you would succeed to the barony; but should she leave issue, they will be called Honourable"—

"What!—'the Honourable Tittlebat Titmouse,' if it's a boy, and the 'Honourable Cecilia Titmouse,' if it's a girl?"

"Sir, it will be so—unless you should choose to take the name and arms of Dredlington, on marrying the sole heiress"—

"Oh! indeed, my lord? 'Pon my life, my lord, *that's* worth considering—because—betwixt your lordship and I, I a'n't over and above pleased with my own name. What will it cost to change it, now, my lord?"

"Sir," said the Earl, struck with the idea, "that is really a thing worth considering. But as for the expense—in an affair of such magnitude, sir, I presume it would not be a matter of serious consideration."

After some further conversation, the Earl came plump upon the great pivot upon which the whole arrange-

ment was to turn — settlements and jointures—oh, as to them, Titmouse, who was recovering from the shock of the discovery that his marriage, however it might degrade the Lady Cecilia, would not ennable him — promised everything — would leave everything in the hands of his lordship. Soon afterwards they separated; the Earl suggesting to him, that probably in a matter of infinite delicacy, like that on which they had been conversing, he would keep his own counsel—to which also Titmouse pledged himself. Soon afterwards, and before seeing his daughter, with an anxious, but not an excited air, he ordered his horse, and took a long ride, accompanied only by his groom: and if ever in his whole life he had attempted serious REFLECTION, it was on the occasion of that same long, slow, and solitary ride; then, for the first time, he forgot his peerage, and thought only of the *man*—and the father.

But to what purpose? Shortly after his return, he sought the Lady Cecilia, and performed his promise, by preparing her to receive, probably on the ensuing day, the proposals of TITTLE-BAT TITMOUSE.

The desired opportunity occurred the next day. Titmouse had slept like a top all night, after smoking in his bedroom a great many cigars, and drinking several tumblers of brandy-and-water. Lady Cecilia, however, had passed an uneasy, and almost a sleepless night, and did not make her appearance at the breakfast-table. Understanding that her ladyship was in the drawing-room, and alone, about noon, Titmouse, who had bestowed during the interval more than usual pains upon his dress, gently opened the door, and observing her reclining alone on the sofa, he closed the door behind him, with a sudden beating of the heart, and approached her, bowing profoundly. Poor Lady Cecilia immediately sat up, very pale and trembling.

"Good-morning, good-morning, Lady Cicely," commenced Titmouse, with evident agitation, taking a chair, and sitting down in it, plump opposite to her.

" You aren't well this morning, are you, Lady Cicely ? " he continued, observing how pale she looked, and that she did not seem disposed to speak.

" I am quite well," she replied in a low tone: and then each was silent.

" It's beginning to look like winter a little, eh, Lady Cicely ? " said he, after an embarrassing pause, looking through the windows—and his words diffused an icy coldness over Lady Cecilia. 'Twas an overcast day; and a strong wind was stripping the sere and yellow leaves in great numbers from the lofty trees which were not far distant, and gave forth a melancholy, rushing, moaning sound.

" Certainly it is getting rather cheerless," replied Lady Cecilia, after several moments' pause. Titmouse turned pale; and, twirling his fingers in his hair, fixed upon her a stupid and most embarrassing look, under which her eyes fell towards the ground, and remained looking in that direction.

" I—I—hope his lordship's been saying a good word for me, Lady Cicely ? " he inquired, with an absurdly sheskish air.

" My father mentioned your name to me yesterday," she replied, trembling excessively.

" 'Pon my soul, monstrous kind ! " said Titmouse, trying desperately to look at his ease. " Said he'd break the ice for me." Here ensued another pause. " Everybody must have a beginning, you know. 'Pon my solemn honour, Lady Cicely, all he said about me is quite true." Profoundly as was Lady Cecilia depressed, she looked up at Titmouse for a moment with evident surprise. " Now, Lady Cicely, just as between friends, didn't he tell you something *very* particular about me ? Didn't he ? Eh ? " She made him no answer.

" I daresay, Lady Cicely, though somehow you look sad enough, you a'n't vexed to see me here ! Eh ? There's many and many a woman in London that would—but it's no use now. 'Pon my soul, I love you, I do, Lady Cicely ; "she trembled violently, for he was drawing his chair nearer to her. She felt sick—sick almost to

death ; and a mist came for a moment over her eyes.

"I know it's—it's a monstrous unpleasant piece of—I mean, it's an awkward thing to do; but I hope you love me, Lady Cicely, eh! a little?" Her head hung down, and—poor lady!—a scalding tear oozed out and trickled down her cheek. "Hope you aren't sorry, dear Lady Cicely? I'm most uncommon proud and happy! Come, Lady Cicely." He took the thin white hand that was nearest him, and raised it to his lips. Had his perceptions been only a trifle keener, he could not have failed to observe a faint thrill pervade Lady Cecilia as he performed this act of gallantry, and an expression of features which looked very much like disgust. He had, however, seen love made on the stage, frequently; and, as he had seen lovers do there, he now dropped down on one knee, still holding Lady Cecilia's hand in his, and pressing it a second time to his lips.

"If your ladyship will only make me—so happy—as to be—my wife—'pon my life you're welcome to all I have; and you may consider this place entirely your own! Do you understand me, dearest Lady Cicely? Come! 'Pon my life—I'm quite distracted—do you love me, Lady Cicely? Only say the word." A faint—a very faint sound issued from her lips—"twas—blush for her, my lady reader—"Yes." [Oh, poor Lady Cecilia! Oh fatal—fatal falsehood!]

"Then, as true as God's in heaven, dear gal, I love you," said he with ardour and energy; and rising from his knee, he sat down beside her upon the sofa—placed an arm round her waist; with his other hand grasped hers—and—imprinted a kiss upon the pale cheek which had been so haughtily withdrawn from the presumptuous advances of the Marquis de Mille-fleurs, and from some half-dozen others; several of whom had been men of commanding pretensions—elegant in person and manners—of great accomplishments—of intellect—of considerable fortune—of good

family; but in her opinion, and that of the Earl her father, not of family good enough, nor fortune considerable enough, to entitle any of them to an alliance with her.

"'Pon my life, Lady Cicely, you are a most lovely gal," quoth Titmouse, with increasing energy—"and now you're all my own! Though I am only plain Mr Titmouse, and you'll be Lady Cicely still—I'll make you a good husband!" and again he pressed her hand and kissed her cold cheek. But slow and dull as were the Lady Cecilia's feelings, they were becoming too much excited to admit of her continuing much longer in the room.

"I'm sure—you'll—excuse—me, Mr Titmouse," said she rising, and speaking quickly and faintly. When she had regained her room, she wept bitterly for upwards of an hour; and Miss Macspleuchan, well aware of the cause of it, knew not how to console one who had so deliberately immolated herself before the hideous little image of Mammon; who, in degrading herself, had also—and Miss Macspleuchan, a true lady, when alone, shed bitter and scalding tears, and her bosom swelled with wounded pride and indignation at the thought—degraded her whole sex. In due time, however, the *Aurora*, a fashionable morning London newspaper, thus announced to the public, as an *auspicious* event, the one which I have so faithfully, feeling much pain the while, described to the reader:—

"It is rumoured that Mr Titmouse, who so lately recovered the large estates of Yatton, in Yorkshire, and whose appearance in the fashionable world has created so great a sensation, and who is already connected, by consanguinity, with the ancient and noble family of Dredlington, is about to form a closer alliance with it, and is now the accepted suitor of the lovely and accomplished Lady Cecilia Philippa Leopoldina Plantagenet, sole daughter and heiress of the Right Hon. the Earl of Dredlington, and next in succession to the barony of Drelincourt, the most ancient, we believe, in the kingdom."

COTTAGE

1882. Jan. 1883.

BOOK THE SIXTH.

CHAPTER I.

MR AUBREY IN THE DEEP WATERS, WHERE HE MEETS WITH A COMPANION.

CONTEMPLATE steadily now, thoughtful reader, for in your eyes it is anxiously desired that this history may find favour, the dreadful, the desperate reverse in Mr Aubrey's circumstances. He has suddenly fallen from a commanding position in society: from that of a high-born English gentleman, possessed of a fine income, and all of luxury, splendour, and opportunity for gratifying a disposition of noble munificence, that it can secure—and whose qualifications and prospects justified him in aspiring to the highest senatorial distinction:—behold him, I say, with his beloved and helpless family, sunk—lower than into straitened circumstances—beneath even poverty—into the palsying atmosphere of debt—and debt, too, incxtricable and hopeless. Seeing that no one can be so secure, but that all this, or something of the like kind, may one day or other, in the wise but inscrutable dispensations of Providence, happen to him, 'tis hoped that it will be found neither uninteresting nor uninstructive to watch carefully and closely the present condition and *conduct* of the Aubreys.

Bound hand and foot—so to speak—as Mr Aubrey felt himself, and entirely at the mercy of Mr Titmouse and Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, what could he do but submit to almost any terms on which they chose to insist? It will be recollected that Mr Gammon's proposal

was,* that Mr Aubrey should forthwith discharge, without scrutiny, their bill of £3946, 14s. 6d.; give sufficient security for the payment of the sum of £10,000 to Mr Titmouse, within twelve or eighteen months' time, and two promissory notes for the sum of £5000 each, payable at some future period, as to which he had to rely solely on the sincerity and forbearance of Mr Gammon, and the ratification of his acts by Mr Titmouse. This proposal was duly communicated by the unfortunate Aubrey to Messrs Rannington, who obtained from Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, a fortnight's time in which to deliberate upon it. The former almost immediately advised Mr Aubrey to accept the proposed terms, as unquestionably fair, and, under circumstances, much more lenient than could have been expected. This might be so; but yet, how dismaying and hopeless the idea of carrying them into effect! How, indeed, was it to be done? First of all, how were Messrs Rannington's and Mr Parkinson's bills to be got rid of—the former amounting to £1670, 12s., the latter to £756? And how were Mr Aubrey and his family to exist in the meanwhile? And how, moreover, were to be met the expenses of his legal education? As was intimated in a former part of this history, all that Mr Aubrey had, on settling in London, was £3000

* *Ante*, vol. i. p. 368.

stock (equal to £2640 of money) and £423 in his banker's hands:—so that all his cash in hand was £3063: and if he were to devote the whole of it to the discharge of the three attorneys' bills which he owed, he would still leave a gross balance, unpaid, of £3310, 6s. 6d.! And yet for him to talk of giving security for the payment of £10,000 within eighteen months—and his own notes of hand for £10,000 more! It was really almost maddening to sit down and contemplate all this. But he felt that he must not fold his arms in impotence and despair—he must look his difficulties straight in the face, and encounter them as best he might. He resolved to devote every farthing he had, except £200, to the liquidation of Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap's account, and, through their generous friendliness, in smaller proportion, those also of Messrs Runnington and Mr Parkinson. If necessary, he resolved, though his heart thrilled with anguish at the thought, to sell his books, and the remnant of old family plate that he had preserved. Then he would strain every nerve to contribute towards the support of himself and of his family, by his literary exertions during every moment that he could spare from his legal studies; practising, at the same time, the severest economy that was consistent with health, and the preservation of a respectable exterior. He resolved, also, though with a shudder, to commit himself to Gammon and Titmouse's mercy, by handing to them, though a fearful farce it seemed, his two notes of hand for £10,000—payable on demand—for such Gammon intimated was usual in such a case, and would be required in the present one. But whither was Mr Aubrey to look for security for the payment of £10,000 within eighteen months' time? This was a matter which indeed staggered him, and almost prostrated his energies whenever he directed them to the subject. It occasioned him inexpressible agitation and anguish. Individuals there were, he believed—he knew—who would cheerfully enter into the de-

sired security on his behalf; but what a mockery! For them to be asked to secure *his* payment of the sum, at the time mentioned, was, in effect, palpably asking them to pay the money for him; and in that light they could not but view such an application. The reader will easily understand the potency of such considerations upon so sensitive and high-minded a person as Mr Aubrey. While revolving these distracting and harassing topics in his mind, the name of Lord De la Zouch always presented itself to him. Had he not solemnly—repeatedly—pledged himself to communicate with that affectionate, opulent, and generous nobleman, in such an emergency as the present? His lordship's income was at least eighty or a hundred thousand pounds a-year; his habits were simple and unostentatious, though he was of a truly munificent disposition; and he had not the drawback of a large and expensive family—his only child being Mr Delamere. He had ever professed, and, as far as he had hitherto had an opportunity, proved himself to be, a devoted friend to Mr Aubrey:—did not Providence, then, seem to point him out distinctly, as one who should be applied to, to rescue from destruction a fallen friend? And why should Aubrey conjure up an array of imaginary obstacles, arising out of a morbid delicacy? And whom were such scruples reducing to destitution along with him? His wife, his children, his devoted and noble-minded sister! But, alas! the thought of sweet Kate suggested another source of exquisite pain and embarrassment to Aubrey, who well knew the ardent and inextinguishable passion for her entertained by young Delamere. 'Twas true that, to pacify his father, and also not to grieve or harass Miss Aubrey by the constant attentions with which he would have otherwise followed her, he had consented to devote himself with assiduity and ardour to his last year's studies at Oxford; yet was he by no means an infrequent visitor at Vivian Street, resolutely regardless of the earnest entreaties of Miss Aubrey, and even

of her brother. Not that there was ever anything obtrusive in his attentions;—how could it be? Alas! Kate really loved him, and it required no great acuteness in Delamere to discover it. He was as handsome a young fellow as you could see anywhere; frank, high-spirited, accomplished, with an exceedingly elegant deportment, and simple, winning manners—and could she but be touched with a lively sense of the noble disinterestedness of his attachment to her? I declare, nevertheless, that Kate wrote him several letters, in *bona fide* dissuasion of his addresses, and which wore such a genuine and determined air of repulsion as most men would have been staggered at; but young Delamere cared not one straw for any of them: let Kate vary her tone as she pleased, and look as grave, and even angry, as her lovely features would admit of. He told her simply that he had sent her letters to his mother, who said they were excellent; so he would make a point of reading all she would send him, and so forth. When Kate, with too solemn an emphasis to be mistaken or encountered with raillyery, assured him that nothing upon earth should prevail upon her to quit her present station in her brother's family, at all events until he had completely surmounted his troubles, Delamere, with looks of fond admiration, would reply that it signified nothing, as he was prepared to wait her pleasure, and submit to any caprice, or unkindness, in which her heart would allow her to indulge. I must own that poor Kate was, on more than one occasion of his exhibiting traits of delicate generosity towards her brother, so moved and melted towards her lover, that she could—shall I say it?—have sunk into his arms in silent and passionate acquiescence; for her heart had, indeed, long been really his.—But whither am I wandering? Sweet Kate, you have led your loving chronicler astray!

—I say, that when Mr Aubrey adverted for a moment to this state of things, was it not calculated to thou-

sand-fold to enhance the difficulty of his applying to the father of Delamere? So indeed it was; and, torn with conflicting emotions and considerations of this kind, nearly the whole of the fortnight granted to him for deliberation had elapsed, before he could make up his mind to apply to Lord De la Zouch. At length, however, with a sort of calm desperation, he determined to do so; and when he had deposited in the Post-Office his letter—one in every line of which the noble and generous person to whom it was addressed might easily detect the writhings of its writer's wounded spirit, he looked indeed a melancholy object. The instant that, by dropping his letter into the box, he had irrecoverably parted with all control over it, and to Lord De la Zouch it must go, Aubrey felt as if he would have given the world to recall it. He stood opposite the letter-box, a wan image of misery. Never had he heaved so many profound sighs, and felt so utterly unhappy and destitute, as during his walk homeward that afternoon. The dear beings to whom he was returning, did not know of the step he had intended to take; nor did he tell them that he had taken it. When he saw his sister he felt sick at heart; and during the whole of the evening was so oppressed and subdued, that the faint anxious raillyery of lovely Mrs Aubrey and Kate, and the unconscious sportiveness of his children, served only to deepen the gloom which was around his spirit!—He had requested Lord De la Zouch to address his answer to him at the Temple; and sure enough, by return of post, Mr Aubrey found lying on his desk, on reaching the Temple three or four mornings afterwards, a letter addressed, “Charles Aubrey, Esq., at — Weasel's, Esq., No. 3 Pomegranate Court, Temple, London;” and franked, “DE LA ZOUCH.”

“I shall return presently,” said Mr Aubrey to the clerk, with as much calmness as he could assume, having put the letter into his pocket, resolving to go into the Temple gardens and there read it, where any emotion

which it might excite, would be unobserved. Having at length seated himself on a bench, under one of the old trees, near the river, with a somewhat tremulous hand he took out, and opened the letter, and read as follows:—

"FOTHERINGHAM CASTLE, 18th July 18—

"MY VERY DEAR AUBREY,

"If you really value my friendship, never pain my feelings again by expressions, such as are contained in your letter, of distrust as to the issue of *any* application of yours to me. Has anything that has ever hitherto passed between us, justified them? For Heaven's sake, tell your solicitors not to lose a moment in procuring the necessary instruments, and forwarding them to me through mine—Messrs Framlingham. I will execute immediately all that are sent, and return them by the next post, or mail. If you will but at once set about this, in a business-like way, I will forgive and forget all the absurd and unkind scruples with which your letter abounds. Since you would probably make a mighty stir about it, I shall not at present dwell upon the *inexpressible pleasure* it would give me to be allowed to emancipate you at once from the vulgar and grasping wretches who are now harassing you, my dear Aubrey, and to constitute myself your creditor, in their place. But on further consideration, I suppose you would distress yourself on the ground of *my restricted* means rendering it so much more difficult for me, than for them, to give you time for the payment of your debt!! Or will you *PLAY THE MAN*," [Lord De la Zouch had doubly and strongly under-scored these words], "and act at once in the way in which, I assure you, upon my honour, I would act by you, on a similar solicitation, were our situations reversed?—By the way, I intend to insist on being your *sole surety*; unless, indeed, your creditors doubt my solvency, in which case I hope we shall be able, amongst our common friends, to find a sufficient co-surety!—

"And now, my dear Aubrey, how

get you on with Law? Does she smile, or scowl upon you? I wonder why you did not go to the fountain-head, and become at once a pupil to your friend, the Attorney-general.* Who is the gentleman whom you are reading with? He certainly has rather a curious name! Well, may Heaven in its own good time crown your virtuous efforts—your unconquerable resolution—with success! Won't it be odd if, when I am dead and gone, and my son is occupying my present place on the benches of the House of Lords, you should be sitting on the woolsack? More unlikely things than this have come to pass: look at —!

"How are dear Mrs Aubrey and Kate, and your darling little ones? Though we are going in a fortnight's time to fill this old place, (the —'s, the —'s, and the —'s, and others, are coming), we shall be, till then, quite deserted, and so, after they are gone. Would that we could insist on all of you taking up your abode with us! Have you seen Geoffry lately? He tells me that he is working very hard indeed at Oxford; and so says his tutor. But I have my doubts. At all events, it is more than ever his father did. Pray write me by return. I am ever, my dear Aubrey, yours, faithfully and affectionately,

"DE LA ZOUCH.

"CHARLES AUBREY, Esq.

"P.S. On further consideration, let *your* people send the deeds, &c., at once on to me, direct from themselves;—'tis a private matter, which is of no consequence to any one but ourselves. No one else, indeed, except your own solicitors, and your opponents, need know anything about it. Neither Lady De la Zouch nor my son will have the least inkling of the matter."

No language of mine can do justice to the feelings with which Mr Aubrey, after many pauses, occasioned by ab-

* Lord De la Zouch did not know that the etiquette of the profession forbade this. No Queen's counsel can receive pupils.

solutely irrepressible emotion, perused the foregoing letter—with dimmed eye and quivering lip. Its generosity was infinitely enhanced by its delicacy; and both were exquisitely appreciated by a man of his susceptibility, and in his circumstances. His heart overflowed with unutterable gratitude towards the Almighty, and the noble instrument of His mercy. He could have flown on the wings of the wind to the dear beings in Vivian Street, with joyous face and light elastic step, to make them participants in his joy. He rose and walked to and fro by the river side with most exhilarated spirits. More than once he resumed his seat on the benches, to re-peruse the document which had so excited him. The sky was cloudless: the sun shone brilliantly; and innumerable brisk and busy craft were moving to and fro upon the broad bosom of the magnificent Thames. Gladness was in his soul. The light without was typical of that within. Several times he was on the point of starting off to Vivian Street; but, on consideration, he resolved to go to Messrs Runnington, and put them into instant communication with Messrs Quirk, Gammon and Snap; and matters having been set in train for the speediest possible settlement, Mr Aubrey returned to chambers; but quitted them an hour earlier than usual, to brighten the countenances of those he loved, by the joyous intelligence he bore. But he found that they also had cheering news to communicate; so that this was indeed a memorable day to them.

Lady Stratton, not only a relative, but a bosom friend of the late Mrs Aubrey, had, it may easily be believed, never ceased to take a lively interest in the fortunes of the unhappy Aubreys. She was now far advanced in years, and childless; and though she enjoyed an ample life income, derived from the liberality of her husband, Sir Beryl Stratton, Baronet, who had died some twenty or thirty years before; yet, seeing no necessity for saving money, she had followed the noble

example of her deceased friend Mrs Aubrey, and bestowed annually all her surplus income in liberal, systematic, and discreet charity. Many years before, however, she had resolved upon making a provision for Miss Aubrey, whom she loved as if she had been her mother; and the expedient she had resorted to (quite unknown to the Aubreys) was to insure her life for the sum of £15,000, the whole of which sum she had intended to bequeath to Miss Aubrey. The premiums on so large an insurance, were heavy annual drains upon her purse; and, together with her long-continued charities, and the expenditure necessary to support her station, left her but stinted means for contributing to the relief of the ruined Aubreys. With some difficulty, however, the old lady, in one way or another, principally by effecting a loan from the insurance company upon her policy, had contrived to raise a sum of £2000; and Miss Aubrey had that morning received a letter from her, full of tenderness, begging her to present the sum in question (for which Lady Stratton had lodged a credit with her bankers in London) to her brother Mr Aubrey, to dispose of as he pleased—trusting that it might be effectual in relieving him from the difficulties which were more immediately pressing upon him. Never had they spent so happy an evening together since they had quitted Yatton. In the excitement of the hour, even Aubrey felt, for a while, as if they now saw their way through all their embarrassments and dangers. Can the reader imagine what must have been the feelings of Miss Aubrey when she first heard of, and afterwards reflected upon, the princely munificence of Lord De la Zouch? If he can, it is well—it is more than I am equal to describing. Her agitation kept her awake more than half the night; and when she appeared at breakfast, her brother's quick eye detected in her countenance the traces of a severe conflict of feelings. With him, also, much of the excitement occasioned by the two occurrences above mentioned,

had disappeared by the time that he took his seat in his little study, at his usual early hour. First of all, he felt uneasy in receiving so large a sum from Lady Stratton, whom he knew to be by no means rich—at all events, not rich enough to part with so considerable an amount, without inconvenience; and he resolved not to accept of her proffered kindness, unless she would allow him to transmit to her his bond for the repayment, together with interest on what he might borrow. Surely this was an unnecessary step; yet where is the man who, on all occasions, acts precisely as a calm and reflecting observer of his conduct, *long afterwards*, could have wished him to act? One must make allowance for the feelings which prompted him—those of a highly honourable and independent and oversensitive man, who felt himself oppressed already by the weight of pecuniary obligation, and sought for the semblance of relief to his feelings by receiving that as a *loan*, only, which had been nobly proffered as a gift; and thus, as it were, in point of fact destroying all the grace and courtesy of the benefaction—but it is useless discussing the matter. I regret that Mr Aubrey should have allowed himself to be influenced by such considerations; but so it was—and worthy Lady Stratton was informed by him in a letter certainly abounding in expressions of heartfelt gratitude and affection, that he had availed himself of her generous assistance, but only on the terms of his being allowed to deposit his bond for the repayment of it, with interest, with her solicitors; expressing his hope that, ere long, he should be enabled to fulfil every engagement into which he might have entered.

This seasonable assistance enabled him to make the following arrangement for liquidating the sums due on account of his sickening attorney's bills:—

Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap's bill was,	. . . £3946 14 6
Messrs Rannington's,	. . . 1670 12 0
Mr Parkinson's,	. . . 750 0 0
	<hr/>
	£6373 6 6

These were his liabilities. Then his assets were:—

Money in the funds,	£2640
Money at his banker's,	423
Advanced by Lady Stratton	2000
<hr/>	
	£5063

Therefore, from	£6373 6 6
Deduct,	5063 0 0
<hr/>	

And there remained, £1310 6 6

As soon as he had made the foregoing statement on a slip of paper early in the morning in his study, he averted his eye from it, for a moment, with a sort of cold shudder. Were he to devote every farthing of assets that he had, he still could not come within £1310 odd of his mere attorney's bills. What was he to do? The result of a long and anxious morning's calculation and scheming was to appropriate £4000 of his assets thus—if he could prevail upon his creditors to be, for the present, content with it:—

To Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap,	. . . £2500
Messrs Rannington,	. . . 1000
Mr Parkinson,	. . . 500
<hr/>	
	£4000

If this arrangement could be effected, then he would be able to reserve in his own hands £1063, and retain liabilities as follow:—

Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap's (balance),	. . . £1446 14 6
Messrs Rannington's (ditto),	. . . 670 12 0
Mr Parkinson's (ditto),	. . . 256 0 0
<hr/>	
	£2373 6 6

Heavy was his heart at beholding this result of even the most favourable mode of putting his case: but he placed the memoranda in his pocket-book, and repaired to his dressing-room; and having completed his toilet, appeared at breakfast with as cheerful a countenance as he could assume. Each of the three assembled, perceived, however, that the others were striving to look gay and happy. Suffice it to say, that within a week's time, Messrs Rannington received the necessary security from Lord De la Zouch, who had thereby bound himself in the penal sum of £20,000 that Mr Aubrey should, on or before the 24th day of January

18—, that is, in eighteen months' time from the date of the bond, pay the principal sum of £10,000, with interest at 5 per cent; and this instrument, together with Mr Aubrey's two promissory-notes for £5000 each, and also cash to the amount of £2500 in part payment of their bill, having been delivered to Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap—who, after a great deal of reluctance on the part of Mr Quirk, finally consented to allow the balance of £1446, 14s. 6d. to stand over—they gave him, first, a receipt for so much on account of their own bill; and secondly, an instrument by which Tittebat Titmouse, for the considerations therein expressed, did “remise, release, and for ever quit claim,” unto Charles Aubrey, his heirs, executors, and administrators, all other demands whatsoever [*i. e.* other than the said sum of £20,000.] By this arrangement Mr Aubrey was absolutely exonerated from the sum of £40,000, in which he stood indubitably indebted to Mr Titmouse; and so far he had just cause for congratulation. But was not his situation still one calculated to depress and alarm him more and more every time that he contemplated it? Where was he to find the sum requisite to release Lord De la Zouch from any part of his enormous liability? For with such a surety in their power, was it likely that Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, would be otherwise than peremptory and inflexible when the day of payment arrived? And if so, with what feelings must Mr Aubrey see his noble and generous friend called upon to pay down nearly £11,000 for him? And was he not liable at any moment upon his own two notes for £5000 each? And were not the holders likely to insist speedily on the discharge of their own serious balance of £1446 odd? What more probable, than that persons such as they and their client, would, as soon as they decently could, proceed to extremities with him, in the confidence that the sight, and the sound of his agonies, would call in powerful and affluent friends to his assistance?

Still pressed, as indeed he was, his

spirit had by no means lost its elasticity, being supported by a powerful, an unconquerable *WILL*—and also by a devout reliance upon the unseen but not unfelt protection of Providence. Though law is indeed an exhausting and absorbing study, and it was pursued by Mr Aubrey with unflagging energy, yet he found time (those who choose may find time enough for everything) to contribute sensibly to the support of himself and his family by literary labours, expended principally upon compositions of an historical and political character, and which were forwarded from time to time to the Review which has been already mentioned. To produce, as he produced, articles of this description—of considerable length and frequency—requiring ready, extensive, accurate knowledge, and careful composition; original and vigorous in their conception and their execution, and by their intrinsic merit arresting, immediately on their appearance, public attention; I say, to do such things—and only in those precious intervals which ought to have been given to the relaxation of his strained mental and physical powers—and under the pressure, too, of such overpowering anxieties as were his, argued surely the possession of superior energies—of an indomitable resolution. Meanwhile, moreover, he contrived to preserve an unruffled *temper*—which, with a man of such sensibilities as his, afforded indeed a signal instance of self-control; and in short, on all these grounds, Mr Aubrey appears really entitled to our deep sympathy and respect. I spoke of his anxieties. Suppose, thought he, health or life should fail him, what was to become of him, and of those absolutely dependent upon him? Suppose illness should invade the dear members of his family, what was in prospect but destitution—or surrendering them up, bitter and heart-breaking contingency! to the precarious *charity* of others? What would avail all his exhausting labours in the acquisition of professional knowledge, while his liberty was entirely at the command of Mr Titmouse, and Messrs

Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, who might, at any moment, actuated by mercenary motives, or impelled by caprice, blight all his prospects, and incarcelate him in a prison! Yet, under this burden—to adopt the language of Sir Henry Spelman on an analogous occasion, *non ingentem solum, sed perpetuis humeris sustinendum*—Mr Aubrey stood firmly. He felt that he was called upon to sustain it; a blessed spirit ever, as it were, beside him, whispering the consolatory assurance, that all this was ordered and designed by the Supreme Disposer of events, as a trial of his constancy, and of his faith, and that the issue was with *Him*. It is mercifully ordained, that “hope should spring eternal in the human breast,” and that, too, in every turn and variety of mortal misery. It was so with Aubrey. So long as he felt his health unimpaired, and his mental energies in full vigour, he looked on these blessings as a sort of guarantee from Heaven that he should be able to carry on a successful, though it might be a long and wearisome, struggle with adverse circumstances. Still it cost him a painful effort to assume and preserve that exterior of tranquillity, which should calm and assure the beloved beings associated with him in this hour of peril and suffering; and oftener than they chose to let him know of it, did the keen eye of a wife’s, and sister’s love, detect the gloom and oppression which darkened his countenance, and saddened his manner. Notwithstanding all this, however, theirs was a happy little home. He was generally punctual to his dinner-hour, to a moment; knowing the thousand fears on his account which would otherwise assail the fond beings who were counting the very minutes, till his arrival: for which purpose, their watches were duly compared every morning at breakfast time. When they had once thus met, they seldom separated till bedtime. Sometimes Miss Aubrey would sit down to her piano, and accompany herself in some song or air, which equally, whether merry or mournful, revived innumerable touching and tender recollections of former days;

and she often ceased, tremulously and in tears, amidst the touching silence of those who had been listening to her. Then he would betake himself to his labours for the rest of the evening, (not quitting the room) they either assisting him—fair and eager amanuenses! or themselves reading, or engaged at needlework. Oh! it was ecstasy, too, to that poor oppressed father to enter into the wild sports and gambols of his light-hearted little ones, Charles and Agnes, who always made their appearance for about a couple of hours after dinner; to tell them “stories;” to listen to theirs; to show them pictures; to hear Charles read; and to join heartily in their frolics, even rolling about on the floor with them! But when he paused for a moment, and his wife and Kate succeeded him as their playmates, for a short interval; when his eye followed their movements—what sudden and sharp pangs would pass through his heart, as he thought of the future, and what was to become of them!—And when their maid arrived at the appointed hour, causing all sport instantly to cease, and longing looks to be directed to papa and mamma, saying as plainly as could be said, “only a *few* minutes more,” how fondly would he embrace them! and when he felt their tiny arms clasping his neck and caressing him, and their kisses “all over” his face, feelings were excited within him which were too deep for utterance—which defy description. ‘Tis said—I know not with what truth—of Robespierre, as an instance of his fearful refinement in cruelty, that a person of distinction, who had become obnoxious to him, he formally condemned to death, but allowed to remain in the torturing, the excruciating presence of his lovely family; he and they aware, all the while, that his doom was *irrevocable*, inevitable; and he momentarily liable to the summons to the guillotine, and which in fact—oh, horror!—came at length, when they were all seated together, one day, at the breakfast table! Oh, the feelings with which that unfortunate person must have daily regarded the countenances of those around

him! How applicable to his condition the heart-breaking strains of Medea—

Φῦ, φῦ, τί περσθέκησθέ μ' ὄμμασιν, τίνας;
Τί χειρογάλατα τὸν τανύστατον γίλον;
· Αἴ, αἴ, τί δέσποι: Καεδία γὰρ οἰχεται,
Γιωτίσει, ὄμμα ταῖδεώς εἶδον τίνας.*

The above passage was one which frequently, on such occasions, occurred to the mind of Mr Aubrey; for he felt himself, indeed, ever at the mercy of those to whom he owed such a fearful amount of money, and for which he was liable, at any moment selected by malice or rapacity, to be plucked from his little home, and cast into prison!

Oh, happy ye, now reading these pages, *unto whom the lines are fallen in pleasant places!* *yea, who have a goodly heritage;* who live, as it were, in a *land flowing with milk and honey;* with whom life glides away like a tranquil and pleasant dream; who are not sternly bidden to *eat your bread with quaking, and drink your water with trembling and with carefulness,*† nor in vain to *rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows;* who have, indeed, *no thought for the morrow;*—oh, ye who have leisure and ample means to pursue the objects of an honourable ambition, undisturbed by daily fears for daily bread—by terror, lest implacable creditors should at length frustrate all your efforts, drive you from your position in society, and precipitate you and yours into ruin;—I say, oh ye! do I appeal to you in vain? Do you turn from this painful portion of my narrative with indifference or contempt, or wearisomeness? If the mere description, brief though it may be, of the sufferings of the Aubreys be trying and unpleasant to you, what must have been to them the actual endurance? Poor Aubrey! As he walked along the crowded thoroughfares, morning and evening, between the

Temple and Vivian Street, what a disheartening consciousness he felt of his personal insignificance! Which of the passengers, patrician or plebeian, who met or passed him, cared—if personally unknown to him—one straw for him, or *would* have cared a straw for him, had they even known the load of misery and misfortune under which he staggered past them? Every time that he thus passed between the scene of his absorbing labours at the Temple, and that green spot—his house in Vivian Street—in the world's wide desert, where only his heart was refreshed by the never-failing spring of domestic love and tenderness, he felt, as it were, but a prisoner out upon parole! It is easy to understand that, when a man walks along the streets of London, depressed in spirit, and alarmed by the consciousness of increasing pecuniary embarrassment, his temper is likely to become irritable, his deportment forbidding, his spirit stern and soured, particularly against those who appeal to his charity; which then, indeed, he might be pardoned for feeling, and bitterly—to begin at home. It was not so, however, with Aubrey, whose constant feeling was—*Haud ignarus mali, miseris succurrere disco;* and though it may appear a small thing to mention, I feel gratification in recording of him, that desperate as were his circumstances, infinitely enhanced to him as was the value of money, he went seldom unprovided with the means of relieving the humbler, and apparently deserving, applicants for charity whom he passed in the streets—of dropping some small token of his love and pity into the trembling and feeble hand of want—of those whose necessities he felt to be greater even than his own. Never, indeed, did the timid eye of the most tattered, starved, and emaciated object suffered to crawl along the streets, catch that of Mr Aubrey, without making his heart acknowledge the secret bond of misery which bound them together—that he beheld a brother in bondage, and on whom he cheerfully bestowed the humble pittance which he believed

* *Μεδεα*, 1036-9. *Anglicē:* Alas, alas, my children! why do you fondly fix your eyes upon me? Why beams upon me *that last smile* of yours? Oh, woe! woe! is me! What shall I do? For now that I have seen the bright eyes of my little ones, my heart is broken!

† *Ezek. xii. 18.*

that Providence had yet left at his disposal!—Prosperity and adversity have equally the effect, upon an inferior mind and heart, of generating selfishness. The one encourages, the other forces it. Misery is apt to think its own sufferings greater than those of any one else, and naturally. The eye, as it were, is filled with the object, that is to say, of distress and danger, which is nearest, in such fearful contiguity, obscuring from view all remoter objects, at once scaring away presence of mind, and centring its hopes and fears upon self. Not so, however, is it when a noble nature is the sufferer, and more especially when that nature is strengthened and brightened by the support and consolation derived from philosophy, and, above all, religion. To many a strong spirit, destitute of such assistance, alas! how often, under similar circumstances, have come—ghastly visitants!—*Despair* and *Madness*, with their hideous attendant *SUICIDE*, to do their bidding?

To Mr Aubrey the Sabbath was indeed not only a day for attending the public services of religion, but also of real rest from the labours of life. It was not one, to him, of puritanical gloom or excitement, but of sincere, cheerful, fervent, enlightened devotion. It would have been to the reader, I think, not an uninteresting sight to behold this unfortunate and harassed family at church. They took almost the only pew vacant, in the gallery, in a church not far distant from Vivian Street, a pew just holding themselves and little Charles; who, since their arrival in town, had begun to accompany them to the morning service. There was something in their appearance, punctual as they were in both the morning and evening, which could hardly fail to interest any one who observed them. There were two elegant and lovely women, dressed in simple half-mourning: a man of calm, gentlemanly manners, and an intellectual countenance, but overshadowed with deep seriousness, if not melancholy—as, indeed, was the case with the whole of the little group, except

the beautiful child, Charles. If their mere appearance was thus calculated to interest those around, how much would that interest have been increased, had the beholder known their singular and melancholy history? Here were individuals, whose condition was testing the reality of religious consolations, exhibiting humility, resignation, faith, a deep delight in attending the house of **Him** who had permitted such dreadful disasters to befall them, and whose will it yet seemed to be, that they should pass through deeper sufferings than they had yet experienced. His temple seemed, indeed, to them, a refuge and shelter from the storm.

To Mr Aubrey every portion of the church service was precious, for its purity, its simplicity, its solemnity, its fervour, its truly scriptural character, its adaptation to every imaginable condition of feeling and of circumstance, indeed “to all sorts and conditions of men.” A little incident, fraught with much interest, occurred to them shortly after they commenced their attendance. An occasional sermon was preached, one evening, by a stranger, from the words, *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him*, on behalf of a neighbouring dispensary. Mr Aubrey was soon struck by the unusual strength and beauty of the sermon, in point of composition—the fervour and simplicity of the preacher. Its language was at once chaste and forcible; its reasoning clear and cogent; its illustration apt and vivid; its pathos genuine. As he went on, Mr Aubrey became more and more convinced that he had seen or heard the preacher before; and on inquiring, afterwards, his name, his impressions proved to be correct;—the clergyman had been at Oxford, at a neighbouring college, and this was the first time that they had since come within sight of each other. Mr Aubrey soon afterwards sought an opportunity of introducing himself, and was recognised, and they renewed their early friendship. Mr Neville, for that was his name, poor pious soul, had nothing to live upon, but an afternoon lectureship

in one of the city churches, from which he derived about £75 a-year; and on this sum alone he had contrived, for the last four or five years, to support both himself and his wife—an amiable and fond woman. Fortunately they had no children; but they had seen much affliction, each being in but precarious health; and a grievous proportion of his little income was, consequently, devoted to doctors' bills. He was a thorough scholar; a man of powerful understanding, and deeply read in metaphysics and divinity. Yet this wretched pittance was all he could procure for his support; and pinching work for them, poor souls, it was indeed, to "make ends meet." They lived in small but reputable lodgings; and amid all their privations, and with all the gloom of the future before them, they were as cheerful a little couple as the world ever saw. And why? The smile that beamed on their cheeks was reflected from the face of the Father of Lights, who had seen fit to lead them through dark places!—They dearly loved, and would have sacrificed everything for each other; and so long as they could but keep their chins above water, and he realise the stern and noble feeling, "*pauper, sed in meo œre,*" they cared not for their exclusion from most of the comforts, and all the elegancies, of life. Mrs Neville generally accompanied her husband whithersoever he went; but on the occasion to which I have been alluding, the good little creature was lying at home in bed, enduring great suffering; and the thought of it made the preacher's heart heavy, and his voice to falter a little, several times during his sermon. He was perfectly delighted when Mr Aubrey introduced himself; and when the latter had heard all his friend's little history—who had indeed a child-like simplicity and frankness, and told Mr Aubrey everything he knew about himself—Mr Aubrey wrung his hand with great emotion, with the fervour of a fellow-feeling. It seemed that a bishop, before whom poor Neville had accidentally preached seven years be-

fore, had sent for him, and expressed such a high opinion of his sermon, as led him reasonably to look for some little preferment at his lordship's hands; but in vain. Poor Neville had no powerful friends, and the bishop was overwhelmed with applicants for everything he had to give away; so it is not much to be wondered at, that, in time, he totally lost sight of Mr Neville, and of the hopes which had blossomed, but to be blighted. What touched Mr Aubrey to the soul, was the unaffected cheerfulness with which poor Mr Neville—now in his fortieth year—reconciled himself to his unpromising circumstances; the calmness with which he witnessed the door of preferment evidently shut upon him for ever. Mr Aubrey obtained from him his address; and resolved that, though, for reasons long ago explained, he had withdrawn from almost every one of his former friends and associates, yet with this poor, this neglected, but happy clergyman, he would endeavour to renew and cement firmly their early-formed, but long-suspended friendship. And when, on his return to Vivian Street, whither Mrs and Miss Aubrey had proceeded alone, at his request, while he walked on with Mr Neville, he told them the little history which I have above indicated to the reader, how the hearts of all of them went forth towards one who was in many respects a fellow-sufferer with themselves, and practising what he preached; was really a pattern of resignation to the will of God; of humble but hearty faith in his mercy, and loving-kindness!

Mr Aubrey was not long in paying his promised visit to Mr Neville, accompanied by Mrs Aubrey. 'Twas a long and not agreeable walk for them, towards St George's in the East; and on reaching a small row of neat houses, only one storey high, and being shown into Mr Neville's small sitting-room, they found Mrs Neville lying on a little rickety sofa near the fire, looking very ill, and Mr Neville sitting before her, with a number of books on the table, and pen, ink, and paper, with which he was occupied preparing his next

Sunday's sermon ; but there was also a slip of paper on the table of a different description, and which had occasioned both of them great distress ; viz. a rather peremptory note from their medical man, touching the payment of his " trifling account" of £14 odd. Where poor Neville was to obtain such a sum, neither he nor his wife knew : they had already almost deprived themselves of necessary food and clothing to enable them to appease another urgent creditor ; and this new and sudden demand of—certainly an old claim, had indeed grievously disquieted them. They said nothing about it to Mr and Mrs Aubrey, who soon made themselves at home : and by their unaffected simplicity and cordiality of manner, relieved their humble hosts from all anxiety. They partook of tea, in a sufficiently homely and frugal style ; and before they rose to go they exacted a promise, that, as soon as Mrs Neville should have recovered, they would both come and spend a long day in Vivian Street. They soon became intimate ; and, Mrs Neville's health at length being such as to preclude her from attending at all to her needle, the reader will possibly think none the less of Mrs Aubrey and Kate, when he hears that they insisted on taking that task upon themselves (a matter in which they were becoming somewhat expert), and many and many an hour did these two charming women spend, both in Vivian Street and at Mrs Neville's, in relieving her from her labours—particularly in preparing her slight stock of winter

clothing. And now that I am on this point, I may as well mention another not less amiable trait in Kate ; that, hearing of a girl's school about to be founded in connection with the church which they attended, and in support of which several ladies had undertaken to prepare various little matters, such as embroidery, lace, pictures, and articles of fancy and ornament, Kate also set to work with her pencil and brushes. She was a tasteful draughts-woman ; and produced four or five such delicate and beautiful sketches, in water colour, of scenes in and about Yatton, as made her a distinguished contributor to the undertaking ; each of her sketches producing upwards of two guineas. She also drew a remarkably spirited crayon sketch of the pretty little head of Charles—who accompanied her to the place where her contributions were deposited, and delivered it in with his own hand, a sweet voucher for the fidelity of the likeness.—Thus, in short, were this sweet and amiable family rapidly reconciling themselves to their altered circumstances—taking real pleasure in the new scenes which surrounded them, and the novel duties devolving upon them ; and as their feelings became calmer, they felt how true it is that happiness in this world depends not upon mere external circumstances, but upon THE MIND—which, contented and well regulated, can turn everything around it into a source of enjoyment and thankfulness—making indeed *the wilderness to blossom as the rose.*

CHAPTER II.

NEWS FROM DR TATHAM; AND A COMMUNICATION FROM MESSRS QUIRK, GAMMON, AND SNAP.

THEY kept up—especially Kate—a constant correspondence with good old Doctor Tatham; who, judging from the frequency and the length of his letters, written with an old-fashioned, but delightful distinctness and uniformity of character, must have found infinite pleasure in his task. So also was it with Kate, who, if she had even been writing to her lover—nay, by the way, between ourselves, what would Mr Delamere have given, to have seen addressed to himself one of the long letters, crossed down to the very postscript, full of sparkling delicacy, good-nature, and good sense, which so often found their way to the “Rev. Dr Tatham, Vicarage, Yatton, Yorkshire!” They were thus apprised of everything of moment that transpired at Yatton, to which their feelings clung with unalienable affection. Dr Tatham’s letters had indeed almost always a painful degree of interest attached to them. From his frequent mention of Mr Gammon’s name, and equally favourable as frequent, it appeared that he possessed a vast ascendancy over Mr Titmouse, and was, whenever at Yatton, in a manner, its moving spirit. The Doctor represented Titmouse as a truly wretched creature, with no more sense of religion than a monkey; equally silly, selfish, and vulgar—unfeeling and tyrannical wherever he had an opportunity of exhibiting his real character.

It deeply pained them, moreover, to find pretty distinct indications of a sterner and stricter rule apparent at Yatton, than had ever been known there before, so far as the tenants and

villagers were concerned. Rents were now required to be paid with the utmost punctuality; many of them were raised, and harsher terms introduced into their leases and agreements. In Mr Aubrey’s time a distress, or an action, for rent, was a thing literally unheard of in any part of the estate; but nearly a dozen had occurred since the accession of Mr Titmouse. If this had been at the instance of the ruling spirit, Mr Gammon personally had certainly got none of the odium of the proceeding; every letter announcing a resort to hostile measures expressly purporting to be authorised by Mr Titmouse himself; Mr Gammon on most of such occasions, putting in a faint word or two in favour of the tenant, but ineffectually. The legal proceedings were always conducted in the name of “Bloodsuck and Son,” whose town agents were, “Quirk, Gammon, and Snap;” but their names never came under the eye of the defendants! No longer could the poor villagers, and poorer tenants, reckon on their former assistance from the Hall in the hour of sickness and distress; cowslip wine, currant wine, elderberry wine, if made, were consumed in the Hall. In short, there was a discontinuance of all those innumerable little endearing courtesies, charities, and hospitalities, which render a good old country mansion the very *heart* of the neighbourhood. The Doctor in one of his letters, intimated, with a sort of agony, that he had heard it mentioned by the people at the Hall as probable, that Mr Titmouse—the little Goth—would

pull down that noble old relic, the turreted gateway; but that Mr Gammon was vehemently opposed to such a measure; and that, if it were preserved after all, it would be entirely owing to the taste and influence of that gentleman. Had Dr Tatham chosen, he could have added a fact which would indeed have saddened his friends—viz. that the old sycamore, which had been preserved at the fond entreaties of Kate, and which was hallowed by so many sad and tender associations, had been long ago removed, as a sort of eyesore: Mr Gammon had, in fact, directed it to be done; but he repeatedly expressed to Dr Tatham, confidentially, his regret at such an act on the part of Titmouse! The Doctor could also have told them that there had been a dog-fight in the village, at which Mr Titmouse was present! Persons were beginning to make their appearance too, at Yatton, of a very different description from any who had been seen there in the time of the Aubreys—persons, now and then, of loose, wild, and reckless characters. Mr Titmouse would often get up a fight in the village, and reward the victor with five or ten shillings! Then the snug and quiet little "Aubrey Arms" was metamorphosed into the "Titmouse Arms;" and another set up in opposition to it, and called "The Toper's Arms;" and it was really painful to see the increasing trade driven by each of them. They were both full every night, and often during the day also; and the vigilant, affectionate, and grieved eye of the good vicar noticed several seats in the church, which had formerly been occupied every Sunday morning and afternoon, to be—empty! In his letters, he considerably sank the grosser features of Titmouse's conduct, which would have only uselessly grieved and disgusted his beloved correspondents. He informed them, however, from time to time, of the different visitors at the Hall, particularly of the arrival and movements of their magnificent kinsfolk, the Earl of Dredlington and Lady Cecilia, the Marquis Gants-

Jaunes de Millefleurs and Mr Tuft—the novel state and ceremony which had been suddenly introduced there—at which they all ceased reading for a moment, and laughed, well knowing the character of Lord Dredlington. At length, some considerable time after Mr Titmouse's grand visitors had been at the Hall, there came a letter from Dr Tatham, sent by a private hand, and not reaching Vivian Street till the evening, when they were sitting together, after dinner, as usual, and which contained intelligence that was received in sudden silence, and with looks of astonishment—viz. that Mr Titmouse had become the acknowledged suitor of the Lady Cecilia! ! Mr Aubrey, after a moment's pause, laughed more heartily than they had heard him laugh for many months—getting up, at the same time, and walking once or twice across the room. Mrs Aubrey and Miss Aubrey gazed at each other for a few moments, without speaking a word; and you could not have told whether their fair countenances showed more of amusement, or disgust, at the intelligence. "Well! it is as I have often told you, Kate," commenced Mr Aubrey, after a while resuming his seat, and addressing his sister with an air of good-humoured railery; "you've lost your chance—you've held your head so high. Ah, 'tis all over now—and our fair cousin is mistress of Yatton!"

"Indeed, Charles," quoth Kate earnestly, "I do think it's too painful a subject for a joke."

"Why, Kate!—You must bear it as well"—

"Pho, pho—nonsense, Charles! To be serious—did you ever hear anything so shocking as"—

"Do you mean to tell me, Kate," commenced her brother, assuming suddenly such a serious air as for a moment imposed on his sister, "that to become mistress of dear old Yatton—which was offered to you, you know—you would not have consented, when it came to the point, to become—Mrs Titmouse?" For an instant, Kate looked as if she would have made, in the eye of the statuary, an exqui-

site model of beautiful disdain—provoked by the bare idea even, and put forward, as she knew, in raillery only. "You know, Charles," said she at length calmly, her features relaxing into a smile, "that if such a wretch had ten thousand Yattons, I 'would, rather than marry him—oh!"—she shuddered—"spring from Dover cliff into the sea!"

"Ah, Kate, Kate!" exclaimed her brother, with a look of infinite pride and fondness. "Even supposing for a moment that you had no prev"—

"Dear Charles, no nonsense," said Kate, patting his cheek, and slightly colouring.

"I say, that even if"—

"Only fancy," interrupted Kate, *Lady Cecilia—Titmouse!* I see her before me now. Well, I protest it is positively insufferable; I could not have thought that there was a woman in the whole world—why"—she paused, and added laughingly, "how I should like to see their correspondence!"

"What!" said Mrs Aubrey, with a sly smile, first at her husband, and then at Kate, "as a model for a certain *other* correspondence that I can imagine—eh, Kate!"

"Nonsense, nonsense, Agnes!—what a provoking humour you are both in this evening," interrupted Kate, with a slight pettishness; "what we've heard, makes *me* melancholy enough, I assure you!"

"I suppose, about the same time that Lady Cecilia Titmouse goes to court," said her brother, "so will the Honourable Mrs Dela"—

"If you choose to tease me, Charles, of course I cannot help it," quoth Kate, colouring still more; but it required no remarkable acuteness to detect that the topic was, after all, not so excessively offensive.

"Mrs De"—

"Tush, Charles!" said she, rising; and, putting her arm round his neck, she pressed her fair hand on his mouth; but he pushed it aside laughingly.

"Mrs De—Dela—Delamere," he continued.

"I will finish it for you, Charles," said Mrs Aubrey, "the Honourable Mr and Mrs Delamere"—

"What! do *you* turn against me too, Agnes?" inquired Kate, laughing good-humouredly.

"I wonder what her stately ladyship's feelings were," said Aubrey, after a pause, "the first time that her elegant and accomplished lover saluted her!"

"Eugh!" exclaimed both Kate and Mrs Aubrey, in a breath, and with an involuntary simultaneous shudder.

"I daresay poor old Lord Dredlington's notion is, that this will be a fine opportunity for bringing about his favourite scheme of re-uniting the families—Heaven save the mark!" said Mr Aubrey, just as the twopenny postman's knock at the door was heard; and within a few moments' time the servant brought up-stairs a letter addressed to Mr Aubrey. The very first glance at its contents expelled the smile from his countenance, and the colour from his cheek: he turned, in fact, so pale, that Mrs Aubrey and Kate also changed colour—and came and stood with beating hearts, and suddenly suspended breath, one on each side of him, looking over the letter while he was reading it.

As I intend presently to lay a copy of it before the reader, I shall first state a few circumstances, which will make it appear that this same letter may be compared to a shell thrown into a peaceful little citadel, by a skilful, though distant and unseen engineer—in short, I mean Mr Gammon.

This astute and determined person had long been bent upon securing one object—namely, access to Mr Aubrey's family circle, for reasons which have been already communicated to the reader. That Mr Aubrey was, at all events, not *anxious* for such a favour, had been long before abundantly manifest to Gammon, and yet not in a way to give him any legitimate, or excusable, grounds of offence. The Aubreys had, he acknowledged, and especially in their present circumstances, an unquestionable right to receive or reject, as they thought fit,

any overtures to acquaintance. Nothing, he felt, could be more unexceptionably courteous than Mr Aubrey's demeanour; yet had it been such as to satisfy him, that unless he resorted to some means of unusual efficacy, he never could get upon visiting terms with the Aubreys. The impression which Miss Aubrey had originally produced in his mind, remained as distinct and vivid as ever. Her beauty, her grace, her elevated character—of which he had heard much on all hands, and which he contemplated with feelings, the nature of which defied his own analysis—her accomplishments, her high birth—all conspired to constitute a prize, for the gaining of which he deemed no exertion too great, no sacrifice too serious, no enterprise too hazardous. He had, moreover, other important objects in view, to which a union with Miss Aubrey was in fact essential. She was, again, the only person, the sight of whom had in any measure given vitality to his marble heart, exciting totally new thoughts and desires, such as stimulated him to a fierce and inflexible determination to succeed in his purposes. He was, in short, prepared to make almost any sacrifice, to wait any length of time, to do or suffer anything that man could do or suffer, whether derogatory to his personal honour (for strange to say, he conceived that he had it) or not—in order either to secure the affections of Miss Aubrey, or, at all events, her consent to a union with him. Having early discovered the spot where Mr Aubrey had fixed his residence, Mr Gammon had made a point of lying in wait, on a Sunday morning, for the purpose of ascertaining the church to which they went; and having succeeded, he became a constant, an impassioned, though an unseen observer of Miss Aubrey, from whom he seldom removed his eyes during the service. But this was to him a highly unsatisfactory state of things: he seemed, in fact, not to have made, nor to be likely to make, the least progress towards the accomplishment of his wishes, though much time had already

passed away. He was so deeply engrossed with the affairs of Titmouse, which required his presence frequently at Yatton, and a great deal of his attention in town, as to prevent his taking any decisive steps, for some time, in the matter nearest his heart. At length, not having seen or heard anything of Mr Aubrey for some weeks, during which he had been in town, he resolved on a new stroke of policy.

"Mr Quirk," said he one day to his excellent senior partner, "I fancy you will say that I am come to flatter you: but, Heaven knows!—if there *is* a man on the earth with whom I lay aside disguise, that man is my friend Mr Quirk. Really, it does seem, and mortifying enough it is to own it, as if events invariably showed that you are right—that I am wrong"—(Here Mr Quirk's appearance might have suggested the idea of an old tom-cat who is rubbed down the right way of the fur, and does everything he can to testify the delight it gives him, by pressing against the person affording him such gratification),—"especially in financial matters" —

"Ah, Gammon, Gammon, you're really past finding out!—Sometimes, now, I declare, I fancy you the very keenest dog going in such matters, and at other times, eh?—not *particularly* brilliant. When you've seen as much of this world's villainy, Gammon, as I have, you'll find it as necessary as I have found it, to lay aside one's—one's—I say—to lay aside all scrup—that is—I mean—one's *fine feelings*, and so forth: you understand, Gammon?"

"Perfectly, Mr Quirk" —

"It cost me an effort, Gammon, at first,—to do so, for my heart is naturally tender" —

"I fear, my dear sir, you have not hitherto succeeded in your efforts," said Mr Gammon, with a placid smile.

"Well—and may I ask, Gammon, what is the particular occasion of that screwed-up forehead of yours? Something in the wind?"

"Only this, Mr Quirk—I begin to

suspect that I did wrong in recommending you to give an indefinite time to that fellow, Aubrey, for payment of the heavy balance he owes us—by Heavens!—see how coolly he treats us!"

"Indeed, Gammon, I think so!—Besides—'tis an uncommon heavy balance to owe so long, eh?—Fifteen hundred pounds, or thereabouts?—'Gad it's *that*, at least!"—Gammon shrugged his shoulders and bowed, as if resigned to any step which Mr Quirk might think proper to take.

"He's a villainous proud fellow, that Aubrey, eh?—Your tiptop debtors generally *are*, though—when they've got a hit of a hardship to harp upon!"

"Certainly we ought, when we had him in our power!"

"Ah!—D'ye recollect, Gammon? the *thumbscrew*? eh? whose fault was it that it wasn't put on? eh? Tell me that, friend Gammon! Are you coming round to old Caleb Quirk's matter-of-fact way of doing business? Depend on't the old boy has got a trick or two left in him yet, white as his hair's growing!"

"I bow, my dear sir—I own myself worsted—and all through that absurd weakness I have, which some choose to call!"

"Oh Lord, Gammon! Bubble, bubble and botheration—ah, ha!—Come, there's nobody here but you and me—and eh? *old Bogy* perhaps—so, why that little bit of blarney?"

"Oh! my dear Mr Quirk, spare me that cutting irony of yours. Surely, when I have made the sincere and humiliating submission to which you have been listening—but, to return to business. I assure you that I think we ought to lose not a moment in getting in our balance, or at least coming to some satisfactory and definite arrangement concerning it. Only pinch him, and he'll bleed freely, depend on it."

"Ah, ha! Pinch him, and he'll bleed? That's *my* thunder, Gammon, ah, ha, ha!—By Jove! that's it, to a T!—I always thought the fellow had blood enough in him if we only squeezed him a little. Solet Snap be off

and have a writ out against Master Aubrey."

"Forgive me, my dear Mr Quirk," interrupted Gammon blandly—"we must go cautiously to work, or we shall only injure ourselves, and prejudice our most important—and permanent interests. We must take care not to drive him desperate, poor devil, or he may take the benefit of the act, and"—

"What a cursed scamp he would be to!"

"Certainly; but we should suffer more than he!"

"Surely, Gammon, they'd *remand* him! Eighteen months at the very least."

"Not an hour—not a minute, Mr Quirk," said Gammon, earnestly.

"The deuce they wouldn't? Well, then the law's come to a pretty point! And so lenient as we've been!"

"What occurs to *me* as the best method of procedure," said Gammon, after musing for a moment—"is, for you to write a letter to him immediately—civil but peremptory—just one of those letters of yours, my dear sir, in which no man living can excel you—*suaviter in modo, fortiter in re*, Mr Quirk."

"Gammon, you're a gentleman, every inch of you—you are, upon my soul! If there *is* one thing in which I —but you're a hand at a letter of that sort, too, yourself! And you have managed these people hitherto; why not go on to the end of the chapter?"

"Mr Quirk, I look upon this letter as rather an important one—it ought to come from the head of the firm, and to be decisively and skilfully expressed, so as at once to—eh? but you know exactly what ought to be done."

"Well—leave it to me,—leave it to me, Gammon: I think I do know how to draw up a teaser—egad! You can just cast your eye over it as soon as!"

"If I return in time from Clerkenwell, I will, Mr Quirk," replied Gammon, who had, however, determined not to disable himself from saying with literal truth that he had not seen one line of the letter which might be sent! and, moreover, resolving to make his appearance at Mr Aubrey's

almost immediately after he should, in the course of the post, have received Mr Quirk's communication :—to assume every appearance and expression of distress, agitation, and even disgust; indignantly assuring Mr Aubrey that the letter had been sent without Mr Gammon's knowledge—against his will—and was entirely repudiated by him ; and that he would take care, at all hazards to himself, to frustrate any designs on the part of his coarse and hard-hearted senior partner, to harass or oppress Mr Aubrey. With this explanation of precedent circumstances, I proceed to lay before the reader an exact copy of the elegant letter of that old cat's-paw, Mr Quirk, to Mr Aubrey, the arrival of which had produced the sensation to which I have already alluded.

"SAFFRON HILL, 30th September 18—.

"SIR,—We trust you will excuse our reminding you of the heavy balance (£1446, 14s. 6d.) still remaining due from you to us—and which we understood, at the time when the very favourable arrangement to you, with respect to Mr Titmouse, was made, was to have been long before this liquidated. Whatever allowances we might have felt disposed, on account of your peculiar situation, to have made, (and which we *have* made), we cannot but feel a little surprised, at your having allowed several months to have elapsed without making any allusion thereto. We are satisfied, however, that you require only to be reminded thereof, to have your immediate attention directed thereto, and to act in that way that will conduce to liquidate our very heavy balance against you. We are sorry to have occasion to press you ; but being much pressed ourselves with serious outlays, we are obliged to throw ourselves (however reluctantly) upon our resources ; and it gives us pleasure to anticipate, that you must by this time have made those arrangements that will admit of your immediate attention to our over-due account, and that will render unnecessary our resorting to hostile and com-

pulsory proceedings of that extremely painful description that we have always felt extremely reluctant to, particularly with those gentlemen that would feel it very disagreeable. We trust that in a week's time we shall hear from you to that effect, that will render unnecessary our proceeding to extremities against you, which would be extremely painful to us.—We remain, sir, yours most obediently,

" QUIRK, GAMMON, & SNAP.

"CHARLES AUBREY, ESQ.

"P.S.—We should have no objection, if it would materially relieve you, to take your note of hand for the aforesaid balance (£1446, 14s. 6d.) at two months, with interest, and good security. Or say, £300 down in two months, and a *warrant of attorney* for the remainder, at two months more."

As soon as the wretched trio had finished reading the above letter, Mrs Aubrey threw her arms round her silent and oppressed husband's neck, and Kate, her bosom heaving with agitation, returned to her seat without uttering a word.

"My own poor Charles!" faltered Mrs Aubrey, and wept.

"Never mind, Charles—let us hope that we shall get through even *this*," commenced Kate ; when her emotion prevented her proceeding. Mr Aubrey appeared to cast his eye again, but mechanically only, over the dry, civil, heart-breaking letter, in every word of which might be seen glistening, the image of the Thumbscrew to which Mr Quirk had alluded, in his conversation with Mr Ganimon.

"Don't distress yourself, my Agnes," said he tenderly, placing her beside him, with his arm round her—"it is only reasonable that these people should ask for what is their own : and if their manner is a little coarse"—

"Oh, I've no patience, Charles!—It's the letter of a vulgar, hard-hearted fellow," sobbed Mrs Aubrey.

"Yes—they are wretches!—cruel harpies!" quoth Kate passionately—"they know that you have almost

beggared yourself to pay off by far the greater part of their abominable bill ; and that you are slaving day and night to enable you"—here her agitation was so excessive as to prevent her uttering another word.

"I must write and tell them," said Aubrey calmly, but his countenance laden with gloom—"it is all I can do—that if they will *have patience with me, I will pay them all.*"

"Oh, they'll put you in prison, Charles, directly"—said Kate frantically ; and rising, threw herself into his arms, and kissed him with a sort of frenzied energy. "We're *very* miserable, Charles—are not we ? It's hard to bear indeed," she continued, gazing with agonising intensity on his troubled features. Mrs Aubrey wept in silence.

"Are you giving way, my brave Kate, beneath this sudden and momentary gust on the midnight sea of our trouble?" inquired her brother, proudly but kindly gazing at her, and with his hand gently pushing from her pale cheeks her disordered hair.

"Human nature, Charles, must not be tried too far—look at Agnes, and the darling little loves"—

"I am not likely to consult their interests, Kate, by yielding to unmanly emotion—am I, sweet Agnes?" She made him no reply, but shook her head, sobbing bitterly.

"Pray, what do you think, Charles, of your friend *Mr Gammon*, now?" inquired Kate, suddenly, her blue eyes glittering with beautiful scorn. "Oh, the smooth-tongued villain ! I've always hated him !"

"I must say there's something about his eye that is anything but pleasing," said Mrs Aubrey ; "and so I thought when I saw him at York for a moment."

"He's a hypocrite, Charles—depend upon it, and in this letter he has thrown off the mask"—interrupted Kate.

"But is it his letter? How do we know that he has had anything to do with it?" inquired her brother calmly—"It is much more probable that it is the production of old Mr Quirk alone, for whom Mr Gammon has, I know, a

profound contempt. The handwriting is Mr Quirk's; the style is assuredly not Mr Gammon's; and the whole tone of the communication is such as satisfies me that neither was the composition of the letter, nor the idea of sending it, his; besides, he has really shown on every occasion a straightforward and disinterested"—

"Oh, Charles, it is so weak of you to be hoodwinked by such a fellow ; I shudder to think of him ! One of these days, Charles, you will be of my opinion, and recollect what I now say!"—While she thus spoke, and Mrs Aubrey was, with a trembling hand, preparing tea, a double knock was heard at the street door.

"Heavens, Charles ! who can that possibly be, and at this time of night?" exclaimed Kate, with alarmed energy.

"I really cannot conjecture"—replied Mr Aubrey, with an agitation of manner, which he found it impossible to conceal—"we've certainly but few visitors—and it is so late." The servant in a few minutes terminated their suspense, and occasioned them nearly equal alarm and amazement, by laying down on the table a card bearing the dreaded name of—*MR GAMMON*.

"*Mr Gammon!*" exclaimed all three in a breath, looking apprehensively at each other—"Is he *alone?*" inquired Mr Aubrey, with forced calmness.

"Yes, sir."

"Show him into the study, then," replied Mr Aubrey, "and say I will he with him in a few moments' time."

"Dear Charles, don't, dearest, think of going down," said his wife and sister, with excessive alarm and agitation ; "desire the man to send up his message."

"No, I shall go and see him, and at once," replied Mr Aubrey, resolutely, taking one of the candles.

"For heaven's sake, Charles, mind what you say to such a man : he will watch every word you utter. And, dearest, don't stay long ; consider what tortures we shall be in!" said poor Mrs Aubrey, accompanying him

to the door, and trembling from head | that I shall not stop long," he replied ;
to foot. and descending the stairs, he entered
"Rely on my prudence, and also | the study.

CHAPTER III.

MR GAMMON IN VIVIAN STREET, AFTER THE MANNER OF A SNAKE, IN A DOVECOTE.

In a chair near the little book-strewn table sat his dreaded visitor—suggesting to his disturbed vision the idea of a deadly snake lying coiled before him. Instantly, on seeing Mr Aubrey, Gammon rose, with distress and agitation visible in his countenance and deportment. Mr Aubrey, with calmness and dignity, begged him to resume his seat; and when he had done so, sat down opposite to him, with a sternly inquisitive look, awaiting his visitor's errand. He was not kept long in suspense.

"Oh, Mr Aubrey!" commenced Mr Gammon, with a somewhat tremulous voice, "I perceive, from your manner, that my fears are justified, and that I am an intruder—a dishonourable and hypocritical one I must indeed appear; but, as I have done nothing to forfeit my right to be treated as one gentleman is entitled to be treated by another, I request you to hear me. This visit appears indeed unseasonable; but, late this afternoon, I made a discovery which has shocked me severely, nay, I may say, disgusted me beyond expression. Am I right, Mr Aubrey, in supposing that this evening you have received a letter from Mr Quirk, and about the balance due on our account?"

"I have, sir," replied Mr Aubrey, coldly.

"I thought as much," muttered Gammon with suppressed vehemence—"execrable, heartless, sordid old—And he *knew*," continued Gam-

mon, addressing Mr Aubrey in an indignant tone, "that my word was solemnly pledged to you."

"I have no intention of making any complaint, or uttering any reproaches, sir," said Mr Aubrey, eyeing his agitated companion searchingly.

"But *I* have, Mr Aubrey," said Gammon, haughtily. "My senior partner has broken faith with me. Sir, you have already paid more than will cover what is justly due to us; and I recommend you, after this, to have the bill taxed. You will thereby get rid of every farthing of the balance now demanded; and I give you this recommendation *bona fide*, and upon the honour of a gentleman." Notwithstanding the air of sincerity with which this was uttered, a cold thrill of apprehension and suspicion passed through Mr Aubrey's heart, and he felt confident that some subtle and dangerous manœuvre was being practised upon him—that he was urged to take some hostile step for instance—which would be unsuccessful, and yet afford a pretext to Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, to treat him as one guilty of a breach of faith, and warrant them in proceeding to extremities. He regarded Mr Gammon's words as the hissing of a serpent, and shuddered.

"I have no intention, sir, to do anything of the kind," said Mr Aubrey. "The original agreement between us was, that your bill should not be taxed. I adhere to it; and whatever course you may feel disposed to adopt, I shall

take no steps whatever of the kind you mention. At the same time it is utterly impossible for me to pay"—

"Mr Aubrey!" interrupted Gammon, imploringly.

"And what you intend to do, for Heaven's sake, sir, do quickly, and keep me not in suspense, which pales my efforts to seek my livelihood."

"I perceive, Mr Aubrey, that notwithstanding what I have said, I am distrusted," replied Gammon, assuming a proud and peremptory tone and manner.—"I excuse it; you are justly irritated, and have been insulted; so have I, too, sir; and I choose to repeat to you, upon my sacred word of honour, as a gentleman, and in the sight of Heaven, that I entirely disown and scout this whole cruel and paltry procedure; that I never knew anything about it till, accidentally, I discovered lying on Mr Quirk's desk, after his departure this evening from the office, a rough draft of a letter which I presumed you had received; especially as, on a strict inquiry of the clerks, I found that a letter had been put into the post, addressed to you. Nay, more; Mr Quirk, whose rapacity increases, I grieve to own, with his years, has been for many weeks harassing me about this detestable business, and urging me to consent, but in vain, to such an application as he has now meanly made behind my back, regardless of the injury it was calculated to do my feelings, and, indeed, the doubt it must throw over my sincerity and honour, which I prize infinitely beyond life itself. Only a fortnight ago, Mr Aubrey, this old man solemnly pledged himself," continued Gammon, with suppressed fury, "never to mention the matter to either me or you again, for at least a couple of years, unless something extraordinary should intervene!—If the letter which you have received be a transcript of the rough draft which I have read, it is a vulgar, unfeeling, brutal letter, and contains, moreover—for why should I keep faith with even my senior partner, who has so outrageously broken faith with me?—

two or three wilfully false statements. I therefore feel it due to myself to disavow all participation in this miserable product of fraud and extortion—and if you still distrust me, I can only regret it, but shall not presume to find fault with you. I am half disposed, on account of this, and one or two other things which have happened, to close my connection with Mr Quirk from this day—for ever. He and I have nothing in common; and the species of business which he and Mr Snap chiefly court and relish, is perfectly odious to me. But if I should continue in the firm, I will undertake to supply you with one pretty conclusive evidence of my sincerity and truth in what I have been saying to you—namely, that on the faith and honour of a gentleman, you may depend upon hearing no more of this matter from any member of our firm, except from me, and that at a very remote period. Let the event, Mr Aubrey, speak for itself."—While Gammon was speaking with eloquent earnestness and fervour, he had felt Mr Aubrey's eye fixed on him with an expression of stern incredulity—which, however, he at length perceived, with infinite inward relief and pleasure, to be giving way as he went on.

"Certainly, Mr Gammon"—said Mr Aubrey, in a tone and manner different from that which he had till then adopted—"I will not disguise from you that the letter you have mentioned, has occasioned me, and my family, deep distress and dismay; for it is utterly out of my power to comply with your requisitions: and if it be intended to be really acted on, and followed up"—he paused, and with difficulty repressed his emotions, "all my little plans are for ever frustrated—and I am at your mercy—to go to prison, if you choose, and there end my days, or be released on terms ignominious to a man of my station, and with my opinions."—He paused—his lip trembled, and his eyes were for a moment obscured with starting tears. So, also, appeared it with Mr Gammon,

who looked for some time aside. "But,"—resumed Mr Aubrey,—“after the explicit and voluntary assurance which you have given me, I feel it impossible not to give you implicit credence. I can imagine no motive for what would be otherwise such elaborate and dreadful deception!"

“Motive, Mr Aubrey!” replied Gammon. “The only motive I am conscious of, is one supplied by profound sympathy for your misfortunes—admiration of your character—and my sole object is, your speedy extrication from your serious embarrassments. I am in the habit, Mr Aubrey,” he continued in a lower tone, “of concealing and checking my feelings—but there are occasions”—he paused, and added with a somewhat faltering voice—“Mr Aubrey, it pains me inexpessibly to observe that your anxieties—your severe exertions—I trust in God I may not rightly add, your privations—are telling on your appearance. You are certainly much thinner.” It was impossible for Mr Aubrey any longer to distrust the sincerity of Mr Gammon—to withstand the arts of this consummate deceiver. In a contest of this kind, a noble nature has too often little chance with a base one,—an unsuspecting, with a designing and cautious one. The former is constantly off its guard; the latter never. Thus it came to pass that Mr Aubrey’s frank simplicity was worsted by Gammon’s treacherous astuteness. Mr Aubrey held out long, but at length surrendered entirely, and fully believed all that Gammon had said:—entertaining, moreover, commensurate feelings of gratitude towards one who had done so much to protect him from rapacious avarice, and the ruin into which it would have precipitated him; and of respect, for one who had evinced such an anxious, scrupulous, and sensitive jealousy for his own honour and reputation, and resolute determination to vindicate it against suspicion. Subsequent conversation served to strengthen Mr Aubrey’s favourable disposition towards Gammon; and the same effect was also produced, when he adverted to his previous and un-

warrantable distrust and disbelief of that gentleman. He looked fatigued and harassed; it was growing late; he had come, on his errand of courtesy and kindness, a great distance: why should not Mr Aubrey ask him up-stairs, to join them at tea? To be sure, Mr Aubrey had hitherto felt a disinclination—he scarce knew why—to have any more than mere business intercourse with Mr Gammon, a member of such a firm as Quirk, Gammon, and Snap—and, moreover, Mr Runnington had more than once let fall expressions indicative of vehement suspicion of Mr Gammon; so had the Attorney-general; but what had Gammon’s conduct been? Had it not practically given the lie to such insinuations and distrust, unless Mr Aubrey was to own himself incapable of forming a judgment on a man’s line of conduct which had been so closely watched as that of Gammon, by himself, Aubrey? Then Miss Aubrey had ever, and especially that evening—expressed an intense dislike of Mr Gammon—had avowed, also, her early and uniform disgust—’twould be extremely embarrassing to her suddenly to introduce into her presence such an individual as Gammon: again, he had promised to return quickly, in order to relieve their anxiety: why should he not have the inexpressible gratification of letting Mr Gammon himself, in his own pointed and impressive manner, dispel all their fears? He would, probably, not stay long.

“Mr Gammon,” said he, having balanced for some moments these conflicting considerations in his mind—“there are only Mrs Aubrey, and my sister up-stairs. I am sure they will be happy to see me return to them in time for tea, accompanied by the bearer of such agreeable tidings as yours. Mr Quirk’s letter, to be frank, reached me when in their presence, and we all read it together, and were distressed and confounded at its contents.” After a faint show of reluctance to trespass on the ladies so suddenly, and at so late an hour, Mr Gammon slipped off his great-coat,

and, with intense but suppressed feelings of exultation at the success of his scheme, followed Mr Aubrey upstairs. He was not a little flustered on entering the room and catching a first glimpse of the two lovely women—one of them, too, *Miss Aubrey*—sitting in it, their faces turned with eager interest and apprehension towards the door, as he made his appearance. He observed that both started, and turned excessively pale.

"Let me introduce to you," said Mr Aubrey quickly, and with a bright assuring smile, "a gentleman who has kindly called to relieve us all from great anxiety—Mr Gammon : Mr Gammon, Mrs Aubrey—*Miss Aubrey*." Mr Gammon bowed with an air of deep deference, but with easy self-possession; his soul thrilling within him at the sight of her whose image had never been from before his eyes since they had first seen her.

"I shall trespass on you for only a few minutes, ladies," said he diffidently, approaching the chair towards which he was motioned. "I could not resist the opportunity so politely afforded me by Mr Aubrey of paying my compliments here, and personally assuring you of my utter abhorrence of the mercenary and oppressive conduct of a person with whom, alas ! I am closely connected in business, and with whose letter to you of this evening I only casually became acquainted a few moments before starting off hither. Forget it, ladies ; I pledge my honour that it shall *never be acted on!*" This he said with a fervour of manner that could not but make an impression on those whom he addressed.

"I am sure we are happy to see you, Mr Gammon, and much obliged to you, indeed," said Mrs Aubrey, with a sweet smile, and a face from which alarm was vanishing fast. Miss Aubrey said nothing ; her brilliant eyes glanced with piercing anxiety, now at her brother, then at his companion. Gammon felt that he was distrusted. Nothing could be more prepossessing—more bland and insinuating, without a trace of fulsome-

ness, than his manner and address, as he took his seat between these two agitated but charming women. Miss Aubrey's paleness rather suddenly gave way to a vivid and beautiful flush ; and her eyes presently sparkled with delighted surprise on perceiving the relieved air of her brother, and the apparent cordiality and sincerity of Mr Gammon. When she reflected, moreover, on her expressions of harshness and severity concerning him that very evening, and of which he now appeared so undeserving, it threw into her manner towards him a sort of delicate and enchanting embarrassment. Her ear drank in eagerly every word he uttered, so pointed, so significant, so full of earnest goodwill towards her brother. Their visitor's manner was that of a gentleman ; his countenance and conversation were those of a man of intellect. Was *this* the keen and cruel pettifogger whom she had learned at once to dread and to despise ? They and he were, in a word, completely at their ease together, within a few minutes after he had taken his seat at the tea-table. Miss Aubrey's beauty shone that evening with even unwonted lustre, and appeared as if it had been not in the least impaired by the anguish of mind which she had so long suffered. "Tis quite impossible for me to do justice to the expression of her full beaming blue eyes—an expression of mingled passion and intellect—of blended softness and spirit—such as, especially in conjunction with the rich tones of her voice, shed something like madness into the breast of Gammon. She, as well as her sister-in-law, was dressed in mourning, which infinitely set off her dazzling complexion, and, simple and elegant in its drapery, displayed her exquisite proportions to the greatest possible advantage. "Oh, my God !" thought Gammon, with a momentary thrill of disgust and horror : "and this is the transcendent creature of whom that little miscreant, Titmouse, spoke to me in terms of such presumptuous and revolting license !" What would he

not have given to kiss the fair and delicate white hand which passed to him his antique tea-cup! Then Gammon's thoughts turned for a moment inward—*why, what a scoundrel was he!* At that instant he was, as it were, reeking with his recent lie. He was there on cruel, false pretences, which alone had secured him access into that little drawing-room, and brought him into contiguity with the dazzling beauty beside him—pure, and innocent as beautiful;—he was a fiend beside an angel. What an execrable hypocrite was he! He caught, on that memorable occasion, a sudden glimpse even of his own real inner man—of his infernal SELFISHNESS and HYPOCRISY!—and involuntarily shuddered! Yes—he was striving to fascinate his *victims!*—those whom he was fast pressing on to the verge of destruction—against whom he was, at that moment, meditating profound and subtle schemes of mischief! At length they all got into animated conversation.

Though charmed by the unaffected simplicity and frankness of their manners, he experienced a sad and painful consciousness of not having made the least *way* with them. Though physically near to them, he seemed yet really at an unapproachable distance—and particularly from Miss Aubrey. He felt that the courtesy bestowed upon him was accidental, the result merely of his present position, and of the intelligence which he had come to communicate. It was not *personal*—'twas nothing to *Gammon himself*; it would never be renewed, unless he should renew his device. There was not the faintest semblance of *sympathy* between them and him. Fallen as they were into a lower sphere, they had yet about them, so to speak, a certain atmosphere of conscious personal consequence, derived from high birth and breeding—from superior feelings and associations—from a native frankness and dignity of character, indestructible and inalienable; and which chilled and checked undue advances of any sort. They were still the Aubreys of Yatton, and he in

their presence, still Mr Gammon of the firm of Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, of Saffron Hill—and all this, too, without, on the part of the Aubreys, the least effort, the least intention, or even consciousness. No, there had not been exhibited towards him the faintest indication of hanteur. On the contrary, he had been treated with perfect cordiality and frankness. Yet, dissatisfaction and vexation were, he scarce knew at the moment why, pervading his soul. Had he accurately analysed his own feelings he would have discovered the real cause—in his own unreasonable, unjustifiable wishes and intentions!

They talked of Titmouse, and his mode of life and conduct—of his expected alliance with the Lady Cecilia, at the mention of which Gammon's quick eye detected a sort of summer-lightning smile of scorn flush over Miss Aubrey's fine countenance, that was death to all his own fond and ambitious hopes. After he had been sitting with them for scarcely an hour, he detected Miss Aubrey stealthily glancing at her watch, and at once arose to take his departure with an easy and graceful air, expressing apprehensions that he had trespassed upon their kindness. He was cordially assured to the contrary; but at the same time was not invited either to prolong his stay, or renew his visit. Miss Aubrey made him, he thought, as he inclined towards her, rather a formal curtsey; and the tone of voice—soft and silvery—in which she said “good-night, Mr Gammon,” fell on his eager ear, and sank into his fluttering heart, like music. On quitting the house, a deep sigh of disappointment escaped him. As he gazed for a moment with longing eyes at the windows of the room in which his Divinity was sitting, he felt profound depression of spirit. He had altogether failed; and he had an insupportable consciousness that on every account he deserved to fail. Her image was before his mind's eye every moment while threading his way back to his chambers at Thavies' Inn. He strolled for an hour or two before the remnant of his fire, lost

in a reverie ; and sleep came not to his eyes till long after midnight.

Just as the tortuous mind of Gammon was loosing hold of its sinister purposes in sleep, Mr Aubrey might have been seen taking his seat in his little study, having himself spent a restless night. 'Twas little more than half-past four o'clock when he entered, candle in hand, the scene of his early and cheerful labours, and sate down before his table covered with loose manuscripts, and books. His face was certainly over-cast with anxiety, but his soul calm and resolute. Having lit his fire, he placed his shaded candle upon the table, and leaning back for a moment in his chair,—while the flickering increasing light of his crackling fire, and of the candle, revealed to him, with a sense of indescribable snugness, his shelves crammed with books, and the window covered with an ample crimson curtain, effectually excluding the chill morning air—he reflected, with a heavy sigh, upon the precarious tenure by which he held the little comforts yet thus left to him. Oh, thought he—if Providence saw fit to relieve me from the crushing pressure of liability under which I am bound to the earth, at what labour, at what privation would I repine ! What gladness would not spring up in my heart !—But rousing himself from vain thoughts of this kind, he began to arrange his manuscripts ; when his ear caught a sound on the stair—'twas the light stealthy step of his sister, coming down to perform her promised undertaking—not an unusual one by any means—to transcribe for the press the manuscript which he expected to complete that morning. "My sweet Kate," said he tenderly, as she entered with her little chamber light, extinguishing it as she entered,—"I am really grieved to see you stirring so early—do, dearest Kate—go back to bed!" But she kissed his cheek affectionately, and refused to do any such thing ; and telling him of the restless night she had passed, of which indeed her pale and depressed features bore but too legible evidence, sate herself down, in her accustomed place, nearly

opposite to him ; gently cleared away space enough for her little desk, and then opening it, was presently engaged in her delightful task, to her indeed delightful, of copying out her brother's composition.—Thus she sat, silent and industrious—scarce opening her lips, except to ask explanation of an illegible word or so—opposite to her doting brother, till the hour had arrived, eight o'clock, for the close of their morning toil. The reader will be pleased to hear, that the article on which they had been thus engaged, the discussion of a pending question of foreign politics, of difficulty and importance—produced him a cheque for sixty guineas, and excited general attention and admiration. Oh, how precious was this reward of his honourable and severe toil ! How it cheered him who had earned it, and those who were, alas ! entirely dependent upon his exertions ! And how sensibly, too, it augmented their little means ! Grateful, indeed, were all of them for the success which had attended his labours !

As I do not intend to molest the reader with details relating to Mr Aubrey's Temple avocations, I shall content myself with saying that the more Mr Weasel and Mr Aubrey came to know of each other, the more the pupil respected his legal knowledge and ability, and he, his pupil's intellectual energy, and successful application ; which, indeed, consciously brought its own reward, in the daily acquisition of solid learning, and increasing facility in using it. His mind was formed for THINGS, and was not apt to occupy itself with mere words, or technicalities. He was ever in quest of the principles of law—of its reason, and spirit. He quickly began to appreciate the practical good sense on which almost all its chief rules are founded, and the effectual manner in which they are accommodated to the innumerable and ever-varying exigencies of human affairs. The mere forms and technicalities of the law, Mr Aubrey often thought might be compared to short-hand, or algebra, whose characters, to the uninitiated appear quaint

and useless, but are invaluable to him who has seen the object, and patiently acquired the use of them. Whatever Mr Aubrey's hand found to do, while studying the law, he did it, indeed, *with his might*—which is the grand secret of the difference in the success of different persons addressing themselves to legal studies. Great or small, easy or difficult, simple or complicated, interesting or uninteresting, as might be the affair submitted to him, he made a point of mastering it thoroughly, and, as far as possible, by his own efforts; which generated, early, a habit of self-reliance of which no one better knew the value than he—one inestimable, and indispensable, not to the lawyer merely, but to any one intrusted with the responsible management of affairs. In short, he secured that satisfaction and success which are sure to attend the exertions of a man of superior sense and spirit, in earnest about that which he has undertaken. He frequently surprised Mr Weasel with the exactness and extent of his legal information—with his acuteness, clear-headedness, and tenacity in dealing with matters of downright difficulty: and Mr Weasel had once or twice an opportunity of expressing his flattering opinion concerning Mr Aubrey, to the Attorney-general.

The mention of that eminent person reminds me of an observation which I intended to have made some time ago. The reader is not to imagine, from my silence upon the subject, that Mr Aubrey, in his fallen fortunes, was heartlessly forgotten or neglected by the distinguished friends and associates of former and more prosperous days. It was not they who withdrew from him, but he from them; and that, too, of set purpose, resolutely adhered to; on the ground that it could not be otherwise, without seriously interfering with the due prosecution of those plans of life on which depended not only his all, and that of

those connected with him—but his fond hopes of yet extricating himself, by his own personal exertions, from the direful difficulties and dangers which at present environed him—of achieving, with his own right hand, independence. Let me not forget here to state a fact which I conceive infinitely to redound to poor Aubrey's honour, though many may think him a fool for it,—viz. that he thrice refused offers made him from high quarters, of considerable *sinecures*, i.e. handsome salaries for virtually nominal services—which he was earnestly and repeatedly reminded would at once afford him a liberal maintenance, and leave the whole of his time at his own disposal, to follow any pursuit or profession which he chose. Mr Aubrey justly considered that it was difficult, if not indeed impossible, for any honourable and high-minded man to be a sinecurist.—He who holds a sinecure, is, in my opinion, plundering the public; and how it can be more contrary to the dictates of honour and justice, deliberately to defraud an individual, than deliberately to defraud that collection of individuals called the public, let casuists determine. As for Mr Aubrey, he saw stretching before him the clear, straight, bright line of honour, and resolved to follow it, without faltering or wavering, lead through whatever and whither it might. He resolved that, with the blessing of Providence, his own exertions should procure his bread, and, if such was the will of Heaven, lead him to distinction among mankind. He had formed this determination, and resolved to work it out—never to pause, nor give way, but to die in the struggle. Such a spirit must conquer whatever is opposed to it. What is *difficulty*? Only a word indicating the degree of strength requisite for accomplishing particular objects; a mere notice of the necessity for exertion; a bugbear to children and fools; an effective stimulus to men.

CHAPTER IV.

MR QUIRK'S CONTEMPLATED ACTION FOR BREACH OF PROMISE OF MARRIAGE; AND HOW MR TITMOUSE COURTED THE LADY CECILIA.

MR GAMMON, but not without considerable effort, succeeded in wheedling Mr Quirk out of his purpose of enforcing payment, by Mr Aubrey, of the balance of his account. He demonstrated to the old gentleman the policy of waiting a little longer. He pledged himself, when the proper time came, to adopt measures of extreme stringency and undoubted efficacy—assuring his for some time sullen senior, in a low tone, that since his letter had reached Mr Aubrey, circumstances had occurred which would render it in the last degree dangerous to press that gentleman upon the subject. What that was, which had happened, Mr Gammon, as usual, refused to state. This was a considerable source of vexation to Mr Quirk: but he had a far greater one, in the decisive and final overthrow of his fondly-cherished but preposterous hopes of his daughter's alliance with Titmouse. The paragraph in the *Aurora*, announcing that gentleman's engagement to his brilliant relative, the Lady Cecilia, had emanated from the pen of Mr Quirk's wily partner; who had had several objects in view in giving early publicity to the event. *Happening* (!) on the morning in which it appeared, to observe the surprising item of intelligence, while glancing over the fascinating columns of the *Aurora*, at the house of a client, (the paper taken in at their own establishment being the *Morning Growl*), he made a point of purchasing it, on his way home; and on reaching the office, he eagerly inquired whether Mr Quirk were at home. Hearing that he was

sitting alone, in his room—in rushed Mr Gammon, breathless with surprise and haste, and plucking the newspaper out of his pocket,—“By heavens, Mr Quirk!” — he almost gasped as he doubled down the paper to the place where stood the announcement in question, and put it into Mr Quirk's hands,—“this young fellow's given us the slip, after all! See the consequences of my leaving him to himself for a single day! My dear Mr Quirk,” said Gammon, with emotion, and grasping his startled senior partner's hand—“I feel for you from my very soul!”

Mr Quirk having, with a little trepidation, adjusted his spectacles, perused the paragraph with a somewhat flushed face. He had, in fact, for some time had grievous misgivings as to his chance of becoming the father-in-law of the future peer; but now his faintest glimmering of hope was suddenly and completely extinguished, and the old gentleman felt quite desolate. He looked up, as soon as he had finished reading, the paper quivering in his hands, and gazed ruefully over his spectacles at his indignant and sympathising companion.

“It seems all up, Gammon, certainly—don't it?” said he faintly, with a flustered air.

“Indeed, my dear sir, it does! I sadly fear that there must be too much foundation for this rumour! And how completely the little knave has kept me in the dark!” The old gentleman thrust his hands into his waistcoat pocket; then furiously twirled round his watch seals; Mr Gammon gazing

calmly at him, as one may imagine a Talleyrand at a diplomatist whom he was completely circumventing. After a short pause—

"Now," quoth Mr Quirk, comes t'other end of the thing, Gammon! You know every promise of marriage has two ends—one joins the heart,—and t'other the pocket; *out* heart, *in* pocket—so have at him, Gammon—have at him, by Jove!" He rose up and rubbed his hands as he stood before the fire. "Breach of promise—thundering damages—devilish deep purse—special jury—broken heart, and all that! I wish he'd written her—by the way—more letters! Adad, I'll have a shot at him by next assizes—a writ on the file this very day! What d'ye think on't, friend Gammon, between ourselves?" he inquired, heatedly.

"Why, my dear sir—to tell you the truth—sren't you really well out of it? He's a miserable little upstart—he would have made a wretched husband for so superior a girl as Miss Quirk."

"Ay—ay! ay! She is a good girl, Gammon—there you're right; would have made the best of wives—my eyes, (between ourselves!) how that'll go to the jury! Gad, I fancy I see 'em—perhaps all of 'em daughters of their own!" And by the way, in striking the special jury, I'll have my eye on every man with reference to the probability of his being a father!"—The old gentleman rubbed his hands, as before his mind's eye arose the twelve *patres conscripti*—in their box listening with indignant sympathy to the recital of his wrongs by the persuasive Subtle!

"Looking at the thing calmly, Mr Quirk," said Gammon gravely—apprehensive of Mr Quirk's carrying too far so absurd an affair—"where's the evidence of the promise?—Because, you know, there's certainly *something* depends on that—eh?"

"Evidence? Deuce take yon, Gammon! where are your wits? Evidence? Lots—lots of it! A'n't there I—her father? A'n't I a competent witness? Wait and see old Caleb

Quirk get into the box. I'll settle his hash in half a minute."

"Yes—if you're believed, perhaps," said Gammon with a comical dryness of manner which Mr Quirk was too much excited to observe.

"Believe be —! quoth he angrily—"Who's to be believed if her own father isn't?"

"Why, yon may be too much swayed by your feelings!"

"Feelings be —! It's past all that; *he* has none—so he must pay, for he has cash! He ought to be made an example of!"

"Still, to come to the point, Mr Quirk, I vow it quite teases me—this matter of the evidence"—

"Evidence? Why, Lord bless my soul, Gammon," quoth Quirk testily, "haven't *you* had your eyes and ears open all this while? Gad, what a crack witness you'd make! Don't ye recollect how you bothered Subtle once, and beat him hollow? A man of your intellect—and not to serve a friend at a pinch—and in a matter about his daughter? Ah, how often you've seen 'em together—walking, talking, laughing, dancing, riding—writ in her album—made her presents, and she him. Evidence? Oceans of it, and to spare! Secure Subtle—and I wouldn't take £5000 for my verdict!"

"Why, you see, Mr Quirk," said Gammon, seriously disquieted—"though I've striven my utmost these six months to bring it about, the artful little scamp has never given me the least thing that I could lay hold of, and swear to—I say swear, Mr Quirk!"

"Oh, you'll recollect enough, in due time, friend Gammon, if you'll only turn your attention to it," said Mr Quirk, almost winking his eye, suggestively; "and if you'll bear in mind it's life and death to my poor girl. Oh Lord! I must get my sister to break it to her, and I'll send sealed instructions to Mr —Weasel, shall we say? or Lynx? ay, Lynx; for he'll then have to fight for his own pleadings; and can't turn round at the trial and say, 'this is not right,' and 'that's wrong,' and, 'why didn't you have

such and such evidence?' Lynx is the man; and I'll lay the venue in Yorkshire, for Titmouse is devilish disliked down there; and a special jury will be only too glad to give him a desperate slap in the chops! We'll lay the damages at twenty thousand pounds! Ah, ha! I'll teach the young villain to break the hearts of an old man and his daughter. But, egad," he pulled out his watch, "half-past two; and Nicky Crowbar sure to be put up at th'ree! By Jove! it won't do to be out of the way; he's head of the gang, and they always come down liberally when they're in trouble. Snap! Amminadab! hollo! who's there? Drat 'em all, why don't they speak?" The old gentleman was soon, however, attended to.

"Are they here?" he inquired, as Mr Amminadah, that jaunty Jew, entered.

"Yes, sir, all three; and the coach is at the door, too. Nicky Crowbar's to be up at three, sir"—

"I see—I know—I'm ready," replied Mr Quirk, who was presently seated in the coach with three gentlemen, to whom he minutely explained the person of Mr Nicky Crowbar, and the place at which it was quite certain that Mr Crowbar could *not* have been at half-past eleven o'clock on Tuesday night the 9th of July, seeing that it did so happen that at that precise time he was elsewhere, in company with these very three gentlemen—to wit, at Chelsea, and *not at Clapham!* In short, this was a first-rate ALIBI.

Though Mr Gammon thus sympathised with one of the gentle beings who had been "rifled of all their sweetness," I grieve to say that the other, Miss Tag-rag, never occupied his thoughts for one moment. He neither knew nor cared whether or not she was apprised of the destruction of all *her* fond hopes, by the paragraph which had appeared in the *Aurora*. He felt, in fact, that he had really done enough, on the part of Mr Titmouse, for his early friend and patron, Mr Tag-rag, on whom the stream of fortune, as we have seen, had set in

strong and steady; and, in short, Mr Gammon knew that Mr Tag-rag had received a substantial memento of his connection with Tittlebat Titmouse. Thus, how truly disinterested a man was Mr Gammon towards all with whom he came in contact! What had he not done, as I have been saying, for the Tag-rags? What for Mr Titmouse? What for the Earl of Dredlington? What for Mr Quirk, and even Snap? As for Mr Quirk, had he not been put in possession of his long-coveted bond for £10,000? of which, by the way, he allotted £1000 only to the man—Mr Gammon—by whose unwearying exertions and consummate ability he had obtained so splendid a prize, and £300 to Mr Snap!—Then, had not Mr Quirk also been paid his bill against Titmouse of £5000 and upwards, and £2500 by Mr Aubrey? And, governed by the articles of their partnership, what a *lion's half* of this spoil had not been appropriated to the respectable old head of the firm; Mr Gammon did undoubtedly complain indignantly of the trifling portion allotted to him, but he was encountered by such a desperate pertinacity on the part of Mr Quirk as baffled him entirely, and caused him to abandon his further claim in disgust and despair. Thus, the £20,000 obtained by Mr Titmouse, on mortgage of the Yatton property, was reduced at once to the sum of £5000;—but out of this handsome balance had yet to come, first, £800, with interest, due to Mr Quirk for subsistence-money advanced to Titmouse; secondly, £500 due to Mr Snap, for monies alleged to have been also lent by him to his friend Titmouse at different times, in the manner which has been already explained to the reader—Snap's demand for repayment being accompanied by *verbatim* copies—such he stated them to be—of between forty and fifty memoranda—many of them in pencil—notes of hand, receipts, I.O.U.'s, &c., in whose handwriting the figures representing the *sums lent*, and the times when, could not be ascertained, and did not signify; it being, in point of law,

good *prima facie* evidence for Snap of an account stated—as it is called in the event of a trial, simply to produce the documents, and prove the signature of his friend Mr Tit-mous.* That gentleman discharged a volley of imprecations at Snap's head, on receiving this unexpected claim, and referred it to Mr Gammon; who, after subjecting it to a *bonâ fide* and rigorous examination, found it in vain to attempt to resist, or even diminish it; such perfect method and accuracy had Snap observed in his accounts, that they secured him a clear gain of £350; the difference between that sum and £500, being (in strict confidence between the reader and myself) the amount actually and *bonâ fide* advanced by him to Titmouse. Deducting, therefore, £1300, the amount of the two minor demands of £800 and £500 above specified—there remained to Mr Titmouse out of the £20,000 the sum of £3700; and he ought to have been thankful; for he might easily have got nothing—or even have been brought in debtor to Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap. I say that Mr Gammon would seem, from the above statement of accounts, not to have been dealt with in any degree adequately to his merits. He felt such to be his case; but soon reconciled

himself to it, occupied as he was with arduous and extensive speculations, amidst all the complication of which, however, he never for a moment lost sight of one object, viz.—*himself*. His schemes were boldly conceived, and he went about the accomplishment of them with equal patience and sagacity, and he consoled and stimulated himself by constantly dwelling on the grand game he was playing. Almost everything was at present going on as he could have wished. He had contrived to place himself in a convenient fast-and-loose sort of position with reference to his fellow-partners—one which admitted of his easily disengaging himself from them, whenever the proper time should have arrived for taking such a step. He was absolute and paramount over Titmouse, and could always secure his instant submission, by virtue of the fearful and mysterious talisman which he occasionally flashed before his startled eyes. He had acquired great influence, also, over the Earl of Dredlington—one constantly on the increase; and had seen come to pass an event which he judged to be of great ultimate importance to himself—namely, the engagement between Titmouse and the Lady Cecilia. Yet was there one object which he had proposed to himself as incalculably valuable, and supremely desirable—as almost in itself the consummation of all his designs and wishes; I mean obtaining the hand of Miss Aubrey—and in which he had nevertheless a fearful misgiving of failure. But he was a man whose courage rose with every obstacle; and he fixedly resolved within himself to succeed, at any cost. 'Twas not alone his thrilling admiration of her personal beauty, her intellect, her grace, her accomplishments, her lovely temper, her lofty spirit, her high birth—objects all of them dazzling enough to a man of such a powerful and ambitious mind, and placed at present in such disadvantageous circumstances in life, as Gammon. There were certain other considerations, intimately involved in all his calculations, which—as may pos-

* This touches a point of such great importance, and so frequently arising, that the author takes the opportunity of stating at once, what are the legal incidents of that easily-scribbled document called an "I.O.U." In the case of Fesenmayer v. Adcock, 16 Meeson and Welsby's Reports, 449 (A.D. 1847), Mr Baron Alderson with terse acuracy thus expressed himself:—" *Prima facie*, the 'U' means—the person producing the memorandum. The case turns on the construction of the letter 'U'."—And Chief Baron Pollock observed, in the same case, "An apparent stranger to an instrument may be so far connected with it by the fact of producing it as to make it evidence for a jury in support of his claim." It follows, therefore, that though the I.O.U. be addressed to no one, it will support the case of the mere *finder* of the document, on an account stated, unless evidence can be given, showing that "U" does not mean the plaintiff, but some one else who has lost or been wrongfully deprived of it: and now both the *parties* to an action can give evidence.

sibly become apparent hereafter—rendered success in this affair a matter of vital consequence—nay, indispensable. Knowing, as I do, what had passed at different times between that proud and determined girl, and her constant and enthusiastic lover, Mr Delamere, I am as certain as a man can be of anything that has not actually happened, that, though she may possibly not be fated to become Mrs Delamere, she will certainly NEVER become—*Mrs GAMMON!*—Oh forgive me, my sweet Kate, such a momentary desecration of your name!—Loving her as I do, and being thoroughly acquainted with Gammon, I feel deep interest in his movements, and am watching them with great apprehension:—she, lovely, innocent, unsuspecting; he, subtle, selfish, unscrupulous, desperate! And he has great power in his hands: is he not silently surrounding his destined prey with unperceived, but apparently inextricable meshes? God guard thee, my Kate, and reward thy noble devotion to thy brother and his fallen fortunes! Do we chide thee for clinging to them with fond tenacity in their extremity, when thou art daily importuned to re-enter that station which thou wouldest so adorn?

Gammon's reception by the Aubreys, in Vivian Street, kind and courteous though it had surely been, had ever since rankled in his heart. Their abstaining from a request to him to prolong his stay, or to renew his visit, he had noted at the time, and had ever since reflected upon it with pique and discouragement. Nevertheless, he was resolved at all hazards to become at least an occasional visitor, in Vivian Street. When a fortnight had elapsed without any further intimation to Mr Aubrey concerning the dreaded balance due to the firm, Gammon ventured to call upon him, for the purpose of assuring Mr Aubrey that it was no mere temporary lull; that he might divest his mind of all uneasiness on the subject; and also that he might now judge for himself of the truth of Mr Gammon's assurance that he both could and

would restrain the hand of Mr Quirk. Could Mr Aubrey be otherwise than grateful for such active, effectual, and manifestly disinterested kindness? Again Gammon made his appearance at Mrs Aubrey's tea-table—and was again received with all the sweetness and frankness of manner which he had formerly experienced from her and Miss Aubrey. And yet again he called, on some adroit pretext or another—and once heard Miss Aubrey's rich voice, and exquisite accompaniment, on the piano. He became subject to emotions and impulses of such a sort as he had never before experienced; yet, whenever he retired from their fascinating society, he was conscious of an aching void, as it were, within—he perceived the absence of all sympathy towards him; he felt indignant—but that did not quench the ardour of his aspirations. 'Tis hardly necessary to say, that on every occasion, Gammon effectually concealed the profound and agitating feelings which the sight of Miss Aubrey called forth in him; and what a tax this upon his powers of self-control! How he laid himself out to amuse and interest them all! With what racy humour would he describe the vulgar absurdities of Titmouse—the stately eccentricities of the Dreddingtons! With what eager and breathless interest was he listened to! Few men could make themselves more completely agreeable than Gammon; and the ladies really took pleasure in his society; Kate being, all the while, about as far from any notion of the real state of his feelings towards herself, as is my fair reader of what is at this moment going on in the dog-star. Her reserve towards him sensibly lessened; why, indeed, should she feel it, towards one of whom Dr Tatham speaks so highly, and who appeared to justify his eulogium? Moreover, Mr Gammon took special care to speak in an unreserved and unqualified manner, and I must also say, with perfect sincerity, of the mean and mercenary character of Mr Quirk, of the miserable style of business in which he, Mr Gammon, was compelled, for only a short

time longer, he trusted, to participate, and which was really revolting to his own feelings. He did his best, in short, to cause himself to appear a sensitive and high-minded man, whose unhappy fate it had been to be yoked with those who were the reverse. Mr Aubrey regarded him from time to time with silent anxiety and interest; as one who had it in his power, at any instant he might choose, to cause the suspended sword to fall upon him; at whose will and pleasure he continued in the enjoyment of his present domestic happiness, instead of being incarcerated in prison; but who had hitherto evinced a disposition of signal forbearance, good-nature, and disinterestedness. They often used to speak of him, and compare the impression which his person and conduct had produced in their minds; and in two points they agreed—that he certainly exhibited anxiety to render himself agreeable; and that there was a certain *something* about his eye which none of them liked. It seemed to them, when they reflected on the somewhat sinister expression of that eye, as though he had in a manner two natures; and that one of them was incessantly watching the effect of the efforts made by the other to beguile.

While, however, the Fates thus seemed to frown upon the aspiring attempts of Gammon towards Miss Aubrey, they smiled benignantly enough upon Titmouse, and his interesting suit with the Lady Cecilia. The first shock over—which no lively sensibilities, or strong feelings of her ladyship tended to protract, she began to get familiar with the person, manners, and character of her future lord, and so a measure reconciled to her fate. I know that many a fine lady-reader of these pages will at first think it impossible for any woman to act as Lady Cecilia is represented as having acted; but, by-and-by, she will begin to think of Mrs This, and Lady That, here and there, in her own station of society; and then she will sigh, and withdraw her expression of disbelief.

"When people understand that they must live together," said a great judge,

"they learn to soften, by mutual accommodation, that yoke which they know that they cannot shake off; they become good husbands and wives, from the necessity of remaining husbands and wives; for necessity is a powerful master in teaching the duties which it imposes."* The serene and enlightened intelligence of Lady Cecilia having satisfied her, that "IT WAS HER FATE" to be married to Titmouse, she resigned herself to it tranquilly, calling in to her assistance divers co-operative reasons for the step which she had agreed to take. She could thereby accomplish, at all events, one darling object of her papa's—the reunion of the long and unhappily-severed family interests. Then Yatton was certainly a delightful estate to be mistress of—a charming residence, and one which she might in all probability calculate on having pretty nearly to herself. The rent-roll was large and unencumbered, and would admit of a handsome jointure. On her accession to her own independent rank, the odious name of Titmouse would disappear in the noble one of Lady Drelincourt, peeress in her own right, and representative of the oldest barony in the kingdom. Her husband would then become a mere cipher—no one would ever hear of him, or inquire after him, or think or care about him—a mere mote in the sunbeam of her own splendour. But, above all, thank Heaven! there were—oh, shocking, shocking, Lady Cecilia!—many ways in which a separation might be brought about—never mind how soon after marriage: and a separation was becoming almost a matter of course, implying nothing derogatory to the character, or lessening to the personal consequence of the lady—who indeed was almost, as of course, recognised as an object of sympathy, rather than of suspicion or scorn. These were powerful forces, all impelling her in one direction, and irresistibly. How could it be otherwise with one like her—a mere creature of circumstance? Not

* The late venerable and gifted Lord Stowell, in the case of *Evans v. Evans*, 1 Consistory Reports, p. 36.

withstanding all this, however, there were occasions when Titmouse was presented to her in a somewhat startling and sickening aspect. It sometimes almost choked her to see him—ridiculous object!—in the company of gentlemen, to witness their treatment of him, and then reflect that he was about to become her—lord and master. One day, for instance, she drove with the Earl to witness the hounds throw off, not far from Yatton, and where a brilliant field was expected. There were, in fact, about two hundred of the leading gentlemen of the county assembled—and, dear reader, do try to picture to yourself the figure which Titmouse must have presented among them—his quizzing-glass screwed into his eye, and clad in his little pink and leathers!—What a *seat* was his! How many significant and scornful smiles, and winks, and shrugs of the shoulders did his appearance occasion among his bold and high-bred companions! And only about four or five minutes after they had ‘gone away,’ on the occasion in question, this unhappy little sinner was thoroughly found out by the noble animal he rode; and who equally well knew his own business, and the sort of ape he was carrying. In trying to take a dwarf wall, on the opposite side of an old green horsepond by the road-side, he urged his horse with that weak and indecisive impulse which only disgusted him; so he suddenly drew back at the margin of the pond—and over head and heels flew Titmouse, descending plump on his head into the deep mud, where he remained for a moment or two, up to his shoulders, his little legs kicking about in the air—

“Who’s that?” cried one—and another—and another—without stopping any more than the Life Guards would have stopped for a sudden individual casualty in the midst of their tremendous charge at Waterloo—till the last of them, who happened to be no less a person than Lord De la Zouch, seeing, as he came up, the desperate position of the fallen rider, reined up, dismounted, and with much effort and inconvenience aided in ex-

tricating Titmouse from his fearful yet ludicrous position, and thus fortunately preserved to society one of its brightest ornaments. As soon as he was safe—a dismal spectacle to gods and men—his preserver, not disposed, by discovering who Titmouse was, to supererogatory courtesy, mounted his horse, leaving Titmouse in the care of an old woman whose cottage was not far off, and where Titmouse, having had a good deal of the filth detached from him, remounted his horse and turned its head homewards—hearthy disposed, had he but dared, cruelly to spur, kick, and flog it; and in this pickle, stupid, sullen, and crestfallen, he was overtaken and recognised by Lord Dreddlington and Lady Cecilia, returning from the field!

This was her future husband!

Then again—poor Lady Cecilia!—what thought you of the following, which was one of the letters he addressed to you?—Well might Miss Aubrey exclaim, “How I should like to see their correspondence!”

“ THE ALBANY, PICCADILLY, LONDON,
12th Oct. 18—.

“MY DEAR CECILIA,

“I take Up My pen To Inform you of Arriving safe Here, where Am sorry how^r. To say There Is No One which one knows except Tradespeople Going About and so Dull on Acct^r. of Customers Out of Town, Dearest love You Are the Girl of my Heart As I am of Your’s, and am particular Lonely Alone Here and wish to be There where *she Is* how I Long to Fold My dearest girl in My Arms hope You Don’t Forget Me As soon As I am Absent do You often Think of *me w^b*. I do indeed of *you*, and looking Forward to The Happy Days When We are United in the Happy bonds of Hymmen, never To part Again dearest I Was Driving yesterday In my New Cabb In the park, where whom Sh^a. I Meet but That Miss Aubrey W^b. they say (Between you And I and The post) is Truly in a Galloping Consumption on Acct^r. Of my Not Having Her A likely thing indeed that I ever car’d for Such an in-

dividule wh^h. Never Did Only of you,
Dearest What shall I Send you As A
Gift Shall it Be In The cloathing
Line, For there Is a Wonderful Fine
and Choice Assortm^t. of Cashmere
Shawls and Most Remarkable Hand-
some Cloaks, All Newly arrived fr.
Paris, Never Think Of The price wh.
Betwixt Lovers Goes For Nothing.
However *Large the Figure* Only Say
what You Shall have and Down It
shall Come And Now dearest Girl
Adieu.

' Those Can't meet Again, who Never Part.'
dearest Your's to command till death,"

" T. TITMOUSE.

" P.T.O.—Love and Duty To My
Lord (of Course) who shall Feel only
Too happy to Call My Father-In-Law,
the Sooner The better."

When poor Lady Cecilia received
this exquisite epistle, and had read
over only half-a-dozen lines of it, she
flung it on the floor; threw herself
down on the sofa in her dressing-

room; and remained silent and motionless for upwards of an hour. When she heard Miss Macspleuchan knock at her door for admittance, Lady Cecilia started up, snatched the letter from the floor, and thrust it into her dressing-case, before admitting her "humble companion."

A succession of such letters as the above might have had the effect upon Lady Cecilia's "*attachment*" to Titmouse, which the repeated affusion of cold water would have upon the thermometer! but the crackbrained Fates still favoured Mr Titmouse, by presently investing him with a character, and placing him in a position, calculated to give him personal dignity, and thereby redeem and elevate him in the estimation of his fastidious and lofty mistress—I mean that of candidate for a seat in Parliament—for the representation of a Borough in which he had a commanding influence:—but this brings me to topics which must not be lightly handled.

CHAPTER V.

**MR TITMOUSE STANDS FOR THE BOROUGH OF VATTON, BUT UNEXPECTEDLY
ENCOUNTERS A FORMIDABLE OPPONENT.**

AFTER a national commotion commensurate with the magnitude of the boon which had been sought for, the great BILL FOR GIVING EVERYBODY EVERYTHING had passed into a law, and the people were frantic with joy. Its blooming first fruits were of a sort calculated to satisfy the public expectation, viz.—two or three Earls were turned into Marquises, and one or two Marquises into Dukes, and deservedly; for these great men had far higher titles to the gratitude and admiration of the country, in exacting this second Magna Charta from our Sovereign Lord the then King, than

the stern old barons in extorting the first from King John—namely, they parted with vast substantial political power, for only a nominal *quid pro quo*, in the shape of a bit of ribbon or a strawberry leaf. Its next immediate effect was to cleanse the Augean stable of the House of Commons, by opening upon it the flood-gates of popular will and popular opinion; and having utterly expelled the herd of ignorant and mercenary wretches which had so long occupied and defiled it, their places were to be supplied by a band of patriots and statesmen, as gifted as disinterested—the

people's own enlightened, unbiassed, and deliberate choice. Once put the government of the country—it was said—the administration of affairs—into hands such as these, and the inevitable result would be, the immediate regeneration of society, and securing the greatest happiness to the greatest number. It was fearfully apparent, that, under the old system, we had sunk into irredeemable contempt abroad, and were on the verge of ruin and anarchy at home. So blessedly true is it, that when things come to the worst, they begin to mend! In short, the enlightened and enlarged constituencies began forthwith to look out for fit objects of their choice—for the best men; men of independent fortune; of deep stake in the welfare of the country; of spotless private and consistent public character; who, having had adequate leisure, opportunity, inclination, and capacity, had fitted themselves to undertake, with advantage to the nation, the grave responsibilities of statesmen and legislators. Such candidates, therefore, as Mr Tittlebat Titmouse, became naturally in universal request; and the consequence was, such a prodigious flight of Titmice into the House of Commons—but whither am I wandering? I have to do with only one little borough—that of Yatton in Yorkshires.

The Great Charter operated upon it, by *first*, in a manner, *amputating* it of one of its members; *secondly*, extending its boundary—Grilston, and one or two of the adjacent places, being incorporated into the new borough; *thirdly*, by the introduction of the new qualification of voters. I have ascertained from a high quarter—in fact from a Cabinet Minister, *since deceased**—a curious and important fact; viz. that had Mr Titmouse failed in recovering the Yatton property, or been of different political opinions, in either of these cases, the

little borough of Yatton was doomed to extinction, by being entombed in a certain burial-place of decayed boroughs, known by the name of Schedule A: a circumstance showing the signal vigilance, the accurate and comprehensive knowledge of local interest and capabilities, evinced by those great and good men who were remodelling the representation of the country. How little did my hero suspect that his political opinions, as newly-installed owner of Yatton, formed a topic of anxious discussion at more than one Cabinet council, previous to the passing of the Great Bill! Upon such considerations did it—in fact—depend whether Yatton should be at once deposited in "*Schedule A*"; or stationed in the dismal rank of surviving, but maimed ones in "*Schedule B*." As its boundary was extended, so the constituency of Yatton was, as I have said, enlarged; the invaluable elective franchise being wisely given to those most in need of the advantages it could *immediately* procure; and the fleeting nature of whose interest naturally enhanced their desire to consult the welfare of those who had a permanent and deep stake in its prosperity. Though, however, the change effected by the new act had so considerably added to the roll of electors, it had not given ground for serious apprehension as to the security of the seat of the owner of the Yatton property. After a long and private interview between Gammon and Titmouse, in which something occurred which may be referred to hereafter, it was agreed that—(the New Writs having been issued within one week after the calmed and sobered new constituencies had been organised—which organisation, again, had been wisely effected within a week or two after the passing of the act which had created them)—Mr Titmouse should instantly scare away all competition, by announcing his determination to stand for the borough. As soon as this was known, a deputation from a club of the new electors in Grilston waited upon Mr Titmouse, to propose the pecuniary

* Some have imagined this to be an allusion to a disclosure pretended by M. Thiers, a few years ago, *after the death of Lord Holland*, to have been made to him by that nobleman, of what had passed at a Cabinet council!!

terms on which their support was to be obtained. Hereat he was somewhat startled; but Gammon saw in it the legitimate working of the new system; and—nothing was ever better managed. Nobody was in any mischievous secret—neither party compromised; and yet the happy result was—that *one hundred and nine* votes were in a trice secured in Grilston, alone, for Mr Titmouse. Then Gammon appointed Messrs Bloodsuck and Son the local agents of Titmouse; for whom he wrote an address to the electors—and, Titmouse promising to have it printed forthwith, Mr Gammon returned to town for a day or two. Nothing could have been more skilful than the document which he had prepared—at once terse, comprehensive, and showy; meaning everything, or nothing—(*dolosus semper versatur in generalibus*, was an observation of Lord Coke's, on which Gammon had kept his eye fixed in drawing up his "address.") Yet it came to pass, that on the evening of the day of Gammon's departure, a Mr Phelim O'Doodle, a splendid billiard-player, (in fact he had commenced life in the capacity of marker to a billiard-table near Leicester Square), and also one of the first members returned—only a few days before—for an Irish county, in the Liberal interest, chanced to take Yatton in his way to Scotland (where he was going to officiate professionally at a grand match at billiards, at the house of an early patron, Sir Archibald M'Cannon) from London; and being intimate with Mr Titmouse, from whom, to conceal nothing from the reader, he had borrowed a little money a few months before, to enable him to present himself to his intelligent and enthusiastic constituency—they sat down to canvass the merits of the Address which the astute but absent Gammon had prepared for Titmouse. Mr O'Doodle pronounced it "divilish tame and maiger;" comparing it to toddy, with the whisky omitted: and availing himself of Gammon's draft, as far as he approved of it, he drew up the following, which put Titmouse into an ec-

stasy; and he sent it off the next morning for insertion in the *Yorkshire Stingo*. Here is an exact copy of that judicious and able performance—which I must own I consider quite a model in its way, and recommend it for adoption, with suitable variation, in similar cases.

"To the worthy and independent Electors of Yatton.

"GENTLEMEN,—His Majesty having been pleased to dissolve the late Parliament, under remarkable and exciting circumstances, and, in the midst of the transports of enthusiasm arising out of the passing of that second Great Charter of our Liberties, the *Act for Giving Everybody Everything*, with kindly wisdom, to call upon you to exercise immediately the high and glorious privilege of choosing your representative in the New Parliament, I beg leave to announce myself as a candidate for that distinguished honour. Gentlemen, long before I succeeded in establishing my right to reside among you in my present capacity, I felt a deep interest in the welfare of the tenants of the property, and especially of those residing in the parts adjacent, and who are now so happily introduced into the constituency of this ancient and loyal borough. I trust that the circumstance of my ancestors having resided for ages within it, will not indispose you to a favourable reception of their descendant and representative.

Gentlemen, my political opinions are those which led to the passing of the Great Measure I have alluded to, and which are bound up in it. Without going into details, which are too multifarious for the limits of such an Address as the present, let me assure you, that though firmly resolved to uphold the agricultural interests of this great country, I am equally anxious to sustain the commercial and manufacturing interests; and whenever they are unhappily in fatal conflict, I shall be found at my post, zealously supporting both, to the utmost of my ability. Though a sincere and firm member and friend of the Established

Church, I am not insensible of the fearful abuses which at present prevail in it; particularly in its revenues, which I am disposed to lessen and equalise—devoting the surplus capital to useful purposes connected with the State, from which she derived them, as history testifies. I am bent upon securing the utmost possible latitude to every species of Dissent. In fact, I greatly doubt whether any form of religion ought to be ‘established’ in a free country.

“While I am resolved to uphold Protestantism, I think I best do so, by seeking to remove all restrictions from the Catholics, who, I am persuaded, will sacredly abstain from endeavouring to promote their own interests at the expense of ours. The infallible page of history establishes their humility, meekness, and toleration. Gentlemen, depend upon it, the established religion is most likely to flourish, when surrounded by danger, and threatened by persecution; it has an inherent vitality which will defy, in the long run, all competition, and there must be competition, or there can be no triumph.

“Gentlemen, I am for Peace, Retrenchment, and Reform, which are in fact the Three Polar Stars of my political conduct. I am an advocate for quarterly Parliaments, convinced that we cannot too often be summoned to give an account of our stewardship—and that the frequency of elections will occasion a wholesome agitation, and stimulus to trade. I am for extending the elective franchise to all, except (but I am not sure whether there ought to be any such exception) those who are actually the inmates of a prison, or a poor-house, on the day of election; and for affording to electors the inviolable secrecy and protection of the Ballot; being of opinion that the secret and irresponsible exercise of political power is best suited to the genius of the English people, and most advantageous for the institutions of the country.

“I am an uncompromising advocate of civil and religious liberty all over

the globe; and, in short, of giving the greatest happiness to the greatest number. Gentlemen, before concluding, I wish to state explicitly, as the result of long and deep inquiry and reflection, that I am of opinion that every constituency is entitled, nay bound, to exact from a candidate for its suffrages, strict and minute pledges as to his future conduct in Parliament, in every matter, great or small, that can come before it; in order to prevent his judgment being influenced and warped by the dangerous sophistries and fallacies which are broached in Parliament, and protect his integrity from the base, sinister, and corrupt influences which are invariably brought to bear on public men. I am ready, therefore, to pledge myself to anything that may be required of me by any elector who may honour me with his support.

“Gentlemen, such are my political principles, and I humbly hope that they will prove to be those of the electors of this ancient and loyal borough, so as to warrant the legislature in having preserved it in existence, amidst the wholesale havoc which it has just made in property of this description. Though it is not probable that we shall be harassed by a contest, I shall make a point of waiting upon you all personally, and humbly answering all questions that may be put to me: and should I be returned, rely upon it, that I will never give you occasion to regret your display of so signal an evidence of your confidence in me.—I have the honour to be, Gentlemen, your most obedient and humble friend and servant,

“T. TITMOUSE.

“YATTON, 3d Dec. 18—”

“Upon my soul, if that don’t please everybody, no matter what he thinks, and carry the election hollow,” said Mr O’Doodle, laying down his pen, and mixing himself a fresh tumbler of half-and-half brandy-and-water, “you may call me bog-trotter to the end of my days, and be —— to me!”

“Why—a—ya—as! ‘pon my life

it's quite a superior article, and no mistake"—quoth Titmouse, who had sate biting his nails anxiously while the luminous document was being read to him—"but—eh? d'ye think they'll ever believe I writ it all? Egad, my fine fellow, to compose a piece of composition like that, by Jove!—requires a—pen!—and besides, suppose those dem fellows begin asking me all sorts of questions and thingembobs, eh? You *couldn't* stay and go about with one a bit? Eh, Phelim?"

"Fait, Titty, an' it's mighty little awake to the way of doing business that ye are! ah, ba! Murder and thieves! what does it signify what you choose to say or write to them? they're only pisintry: and—the real point to be looked at is this—all those that you can command—d'ye see—of course you will, or send 'em to the right about; and those that you can't—that's the new blackguards round about—buy, if it's necessary, fait!"

"Oh, that's done!—It *is*, 'pon my soul!" whispered Titmouse, somewhat perilously.

"Oh? Is it in earnest you are? Then you're M.P. for the borough; and on the strength of it, I'll replenish!" and so he did, Titmouse following his example; and in a pretty state were they, some hour or two afterwards, conducted to their apartments.

It is difficult to describe the rage of Gammon on seeing the address which had been substituted for that which he had prepared, with so much caution and tact; but the thing was done, and he was obliged to submit. The Address duly appeared in the Yorkshire Stingo. It was also placarded liberally all over the borough, and distributed about, exciting a good deal of interest, and also much probation among the new electors. It was thought, however, that it was a piece of supererogation, inasmuch as there could be no possible doubt that Mr Titmouse would walk over the course.

In this, however, it presently proved that the *quidnuncs* of Yatton were

terribly mistaken. A copy of the Yorkshire Stingo, containing the foregoing "Address," was sent, on the day of its publication, by Dr Tatham to Mr Aubrey, who had read it aloud, with feelings of mingled sorrow and contempt, on the evening of its arrival, in the presence of Mrs Aubrey, Miss Aubrey, and also of one who, in spite of what anybody could say or do to the contrary, was by no means an unfrequent visitor, one Mr Delamere. The Aubreys were sad enough; and he endeavoured to dissipate the gloom which hung over them, by ridiculing, bitterly and humorously, the pretensions of the would-be member for Yatton—the presumed writer (who, however, Kate protested, without giving her conclusive reasons, could never have been Mr Titmouse) of the precious "Address." He partially succeeded. Both Aubrey and he laughed heartily as they went more deliberately over it; but Kate and Mrs Aubrey spoke gravely and indignantly about that part of it which related to the Established Church, and the Protestant Religion.

"Oh dear, dear!" quoth Kate at length, with a sudden burst of impetuosity, after a considerable and rather melancholy pause in the conversation; "only to think that such an odious little wretch is to represent the dear old—What would I not give to see him defeated!"

"Pho, Kate," replied her brother, rather sadly, "who is there to oppose him? Pickering told me, you know, that he should not go into the House again; and even if he felt disposed to contest Yatton, what chance could he have against Mr Titmouse's influence?"

"Oh, I'm sure all the old tenants hate the little monkey, to a man—and that you know, Charles, well!"

"That may be, Kate, but they must vote for him, or be turned out of"—

"Oh, I've no *patience*, Charles, to hear of such things!" interrupted his sister, with not a little petulance in her manner, and a glance at her eyes

showed that a very little would make her weep.

"Do you mean to say, that you should like to see a rival start to contest your dear old borough with Mr Titmouse?" inquired Mr Delamere, who had been listening to the foregoing brief colloquy in silence, his eyes fixed with eager delight on the animated and beautiful countenance of Miss Aubrey.

"Indeed I should, Mr Delamere," cried Kate eagerly—"I would subscribe five guineas myself, if I had it"—adding, however, with a sudden sigh, looking at her brother; "but—*heigh-ho!*—as Charles says, how absurd it is to fret one's-self about it—about a thing we can't help—and—a place one has no longer—alas!—any concern with!" As she said this, her voice quivered, and her eyes filled with tears. But her little sally had been attended with consequences of which she never could have dreamed. Mr Delamere took leave of them shortly afterwards, without communicating a word of any intentions he might have conceived upon the subject, to any of them. But the first place he went to, in the morning, was a great banker's, who had been appointed the principal acting executor of the Marquis of Fallowfield, a recently deceased uncle of Delamere's, to whom his lordship had left a legacy of £3000; and 'twas to get at this same legacy that was the object of Delamere's visit to Sir Omnia Bullion & Co.'s. For some time the worthy baronet, who had not then even proved the will, would not listen to the entreaties of the noble and eager young legatee: but the moment he heard of the purpose for which it was wanted, Sir Omnia being a staunch Tory, and who had *lost* his own snug borough by the Bill for Giving Everybody Everything, instantly relented. "There, my fine fellow, that's a piece of spirit I vastly admire! Sign that," said Sir Omnia, tossing to him an "I. O. U. £3000," and drawing him a check for the amount: wishing him, with all imaginable zeal and energy, good speed. Delamere's excitement

would not allow him to wait till the evening, for the mail; so within a couple of hours' time of effecting this delightful arrangement with Sir Omnia, he was seated in a post-chaise and four, rattling at top speed on his way to Yorkshire.

Sufficiently astonished were Lord and Lady De la Zouch, when he presented himself to them at Fotheringham; but infinitely more so, when he named the object of his coming down, and with desperate entreaties besought his father's sanction for the enterprise. 'Twas hard for Lord De la Zouch to deny anything to one on whom he doated as he did upon this, his dear and only child. His lordship, moreover, was one of the keenest politicians living; and as for elections, he was an old campaigner, and had stood several desperate contests, and spent immense sums upon them. And here was his son, to use a well-known phrase, indeed *a chip of the old block!*—Lord De la Zouch, in short, really felt a secret pleasure in contemplating the resemblance to his early self—and after a little *démur* he began to give way. He shook his head, however, discouragingly; spoke of Delamere's youth—barely two-and-twenty; the certainty of defeat, and the annoyance of being beaten by such a creature as Titmouse; the suddenness and lateness of the move—and so forth.

But all that served only to make his son more and more impetuous.

"I'll tell you what, sir," said Lord De la Zouch, scarce able to speak with the gravity he wished, "it strikes me that this extraordinary, expensive, absurd, and hopeless scheme of yours, is all the result of—eh? I see—I understand! It's done to please—Come, now, be frank, sir! how long, before you left town, had you seen Miss—"

"I pledge my word, sir," replied Delamere, emphatically, "that neither Miss Aubrey, nor Mr nor Mrs Aubrey—whom, however, I certainly saw the night before I quitted town, and even conversed with on the subject of Mr Titmouse's address—has interchanged one syllable with me on the subject of my starting for the borough; and I

believe them to be at this moment as ignorant of what I am about as you, sir, were, the moment before you saw me here."

"It is enough," said his father seriously, who knew that his son, equally with himself, had a rigorous regard for truth on all occasions, great and small—"and had it even been otherwise, I—I—eh? I don't think there's anything *very* monstrous in it, after all!" He paused, smiled kindly at his son, and added, "Well—I—I—we certainly shall be laughed at for our pains; it's really a madcap sort of business, Geoffry; but"—Lord De la Zouch had given way—"I own that I should not like to have been thwarted by *my* father on an occasion like the present; so, let it be done, as you've set your heart upon it. And," he added with a smile, "pray, Mr Delamere, have you considered what I shall have to pay for your sport?"

"Not one penny, sir!" replied his son, with a certain swell of manner.

"Ay, ay!" exclaimed his lordship briskly—"How's that, sir?"

Then Delamere told him of what he had done; at which Lord De la Zouch first looked serious, and then burst into laughter at the eagerness of old Sir Omnium to aid the affair. Lord De la Zouch well knew the old Baronet to be infinitely exasperated against those who had robbed him of his borough! Never was "*Schedule A*" mentioned in his presence without a kind of spasm passing over his features! as though it were the burial-ground where lay one long and fondly loved! "Na, no," said his lordship, "that must not stand; I won't have *any* risk of Sir Omnium's getting into a scrape, and shall write off to request him to annul the transaction—with many thanks for what he has done—and I'll try whether I have credit enough with my bankers—eh, Geoffry?"

"You are very kind to me, sir, but really I would rather"—

"Pho, pho—let it be as I say; and now, go and dress for dinner, and after that, the sooner you get about *your* 'Address,' the better. Let me see a draft of it as soon as it is finished.

Let Mr Parkinson be sent for immediately from Grilston, to see how the land lies; and, in short, since we *are* to go into the thing, let us dash into it with spirit—I'll write off and have down from town—a-hem!" his lordship suddenly paused—and then added—"And hark'ee, sir—as to that Address of yours, I'll have no despicable trimming, and trying to catch votes by vague and flattering"—

"Trust me, sir!" said Delamere, with a proud smile, "mine shall be, at all events, a contrast to that of my '*honourable opponent*'"

"Go straight ahead, sir," continued Lord De la Zouch with a lofty and determined air; "nail your colours to the mast. Speak out in a plain, manly way, so that no one can misunderstand you. I'd rather a thousand times oversee you beaten out of the field, losing the election like a gentleman, than win it by any sort of trickery, especially as far as the profession of your political sentiments and opinions is concerned. Bear yourself so, Geoffry, in this your maiden struggle, that when it is over, you may be able to lay your hand on your heart, and say, 'I have won honourably'—or 'I have lost honourably.' So long as you can feel and say this, laugh at election bills—at the long faces of your friends—the exulting faces of your enemies.—Will you bear all this in mind, Geoffry?"

"I will, sir," replied his eager son; and added, with an excited air, "won't it come on them like"—

"Do you hear that bell, sir?" said Lord De la Zouch laughing, and moving away. Delamere bowed, and with a brisk step, a flushed cheek, and an elated air, betook himself to dress for dinner.

Shortly afterwards, Mr Parkinson made his appearance, and to his infinite amazement was invested instantly with the character of agent for Mr Delamere, as candidate for the borough! After he and the Earl had heard the following Address read by Delamere (who had fancied Kate Aubrey looking over his shoulder while he wrote it), they heartily approved of

it. Mr Parkinson took it home with him; it was in the printer's hands that night, and by seven o'clock in the morning, was stuck up plentifully on all the walls in Grilston, and, in fact, all over the borough:—

"To the Independent Electors of the Borough of Yatton.

"GENTLEMEN,—I hope you will not consider me presumptuous, in venturing to offer myself to your notice as a candidate for the honour of representing you in Parliament. In point of years, I am, I have reason to believe, even younger than the gentleman whom I have come forward to oppose. But, indeed, for the fact of his being personally a comparative stranger to you, I should have paused long before contesting with him the representation of a borough on which he has unquestionably certain legitimate claims. The moment, however, that I had read his Address, I resolved to come forward and oppose him. Gentlemen, the chief ground on which I am induced to take this step, is, that I disapprove of the tone and spirit of that Address, and hold opinions entirely opposed to all those which it expresses, and which I have no hesitation in saying I consider to be unworthy of any one seeking so grave a trust as that of representing you in Parliament. As for my own opinions, they are in all essential respects identical with those of the gentlemen who have during a long series of years represented you, and especially with those of my highly honoured and gifted friend, Mr Aubrey. Gentlemen, my own family is not unknown to you, nor are the opinions and principles which for centuries they have consistently supported, and which are also mine.

"I am an affectionate and uncompromising friend of our glorious and venerable Established Church, and of its union with the State; which it is my inflexible determination to support by every means in my power, as the most effectual mode of securing civil and religious liberty. I am dis-

posed to resist any further concessions to either Roman Catholics or Dissenters, because I think that they cannot be made safely or advantageously. Gentlemen, there is a point at which toleration becomes anarchy; and I am desirous to keep as far from that point as possible.

"I earnestly deprecate putting our Agricultural or Commercial and Manufacturing interests into competition with each other, as needless and mischievous. Both are essential elements in the national welfare; both should be upheld to the utmost: but if circumstances should unhappily bring them into inevitable conflict, I avow myself heart and soul a friend to the Agricultural interest.

"Gentlemen, I know not whether it would be more derogatory to your character, or to mine, to exact or give pledges as to my conduct on any particular measure, great or small, which may come before Parliament. It appears to me both absurd and ignominious, and inconsistent with every true principle of representation. One, however, I willingly give you—that I will endeavour to do my duty, by consulting your interests as a part of the general interests of the nation. I trust that I shall never be found uncourteous or inaccessible; but I am confident that none of you will entertain unreasonable expectations concerning my power to serve you individually or collectively.

"Gentlemen, having entered into this contest, I pledge myself to fight it out to the last; and, if I fail, to retire with good-humour. My friends and I will keep a vigilant eye on any attempts which may be made to resort to undue influence, or coercion; which, however, I cannot suppose will be the case.

"Gentlemen, this is the best account I can give you, within the limits of such an Address as the present, of my political opinions, and of the motives which have induced me to come forward; and I shall, within a day or two, proceed to call upon you personally. In the mean-

while I remain, Gentlemen, your faithful servant,

"GEOFFRY LOVEL DELAMERE.

"FOTHERINGHAM CASTLE, 7th Dec. 18.—"

Two or three days afterwards there arrived at Mr Aubrey's, in Vivian Street, two large packets, franked "DE LA ZOUCH," and addressed to Mr Aubrey, containing four copies of the foregoing "Address," accompanied by the following hurried note :—

"FOTHERINGHAM, 8th Dec. 18.—

"MY DEAR AUBREY,—What think you of this sudden and somewhat Quixotic enterprise of Geoffry? I fear it is quite hopeless—but there was no resisting his importunities. I must say he is going into the affair (which has already made a prodigious stir down here) in a very fine spirit. His *Address* is good, is it not? The only thing I regret is, his entering the lists with such a creature as that fellow Titmouse—and, moreover, being beaten by him.—Yours ever faithfully and affectionately,

"DE LA ZOUCH.

"P.S.—You should only see little Dr Tatham since he has heard of it. He spins about the village like a humming-top! I hope that, as far as his worldly interests are concerned, he is not acting imprudently: but I will take care of that, for I love and reverence the little Doctor. Our dear love to the ladies. (In great haste.)"

This letter was read with almost suspended breath by Mr Aubrey, and then by Mrs and Miss Aubrey. With still greater emotion were the printed enclosures opened and read. Each was held in a trembling hand, its reader's colour going and coming. Miss Aubrey's heart beat faster and faster; she turned very pale—but with a strong effort recovered herself. Then taking the candle, she withdrew with a hasty and excited air, taking her copy of the Address with her to her own room; and there burst into tears, and wept for some time. She felt her heart dissolving in tenderness towards

Delamere! It was some time before she could summon resolution enough to return. When she did, Mrs Aubrey made a faint effort to rally her; but each, on observing the traces of the other's recent and strong emotion, was silent, and with difficulty preserved any semblance of a calm demeanour.

Equally strong emotions, but of a different description, were excited in the bosoms of certain persons at Yatton Hall, by the appearance of Mr Delamere's address. 'Twas Mr Barnabas Bloodsuck, (junior)—a middle-sized, square-set young man, of about thirty, with a broad face, a very flat nose, light frizzly hair, and deep-set grey eyes—a bustling, confident, hard-mouthed fellow—who, happening to be stirring in the main street of Griston early in the morning of the 8th December 18,—beheld a man in the act of sticking up Mr Delamere's Address against a wall. Having prevailed on the man to part with one, Mr Bloodsuck was within a quarter of an hour on horseback, galloping down to Yatton—almost imagining himself to be carrying with him a sort of hand-grenade, which might explode in his pocket as he went on. He was ushered into the breakfast-room, where sate Mr Gammon and Mr Titmouse, just finishing their morning meal.

"My stars—good morning! gents,—but here's a kettle of fish!" quoth Mr Bloodsuck with an excited air, wiping the perspiration from his forehead; and then plucking out of his pocket the damp and crumpled Address of Mr Delamere, he handed it to Mr Gammon, who changed colour on seeing it, and read it over in silence. Mr Titmouse looked at him with a disturbed air; and having finished his mixture of tea and brandy, "Eh—e—eh, Gammon!—I say"—he stammered—"what's in the wind? 'Pou my soul, you look—eh?"

"Nothing but a piece of good fortune, for which you are indebted to your distinguished friend Mr Phelim O'Something," replied Gammon bitterly, "whose precious Address has called forth for you an opponent whom you would not otherwise have had."

"Hang Mr O'Doodle!" exclaimed Titmouse; "I—'pon my precious soul—I always thought him a-a fool and a knave. I'll make him pay me the money he owes me!" and he strode up and down the room, with his hands thrust furiously into his pockets.

"You had perhaps better direct your powerful mind to this Address," quoth Mr Gammon, with a blighting smile, "as it slightly concerns you;" and handing it to Titmouse, the latter sat down to try and obey him.

"That cock won't *really* fight, though, eh?" inquired Mr Bloodsuck, as he resumed his seat after helping himself to an enormous slice of cold beef at the side table!

"I think it *will*," replied Mr Gammon thoughtfully: and presently continued, after a pause, with a visible effort to speak calmly, "it is useless to say anything about the haughty intolerant Toryism it displays; that is all fair; but *is* it not hard, Mr Bloodsuck, that when I had written an Address which would have effectually"—

"Mr Phelim O'Doodle owes me three hundred pounds, Gammon, and I hope you'll get it for me at once; 'pon my soul, he's a most cursed scamp," quoth Titmouse furiously, looking up with an air of desperate chagrin, on hearing Gammon's last words. That gentleman, however, took no notice of him, and proceeded, addressing Mr Bloodsuck, "I have weighed every word in that Address. *It means mischief.* It has evidently been well considered; it is calm and determined—and we shall have a desperate contest, or I am grievously mistaken."

"E—e—eh? E—h? What, Gammon?" inquired Titmouse, who, though his eye appeared, in obedience to Gammon, to have been travelling over the all-important document which he held in his hand, had been listening with trembling anxiety to what was said by his companions.

"I say that we are to have a contested election: that you won't walk over the course, as you might have done. Here's a most formidable opponent started against you!"

"What? 'Pon my soul—for *my* borough? For Yatton?"

"Yes, and one who will fight you tooth and nail."

"'Pon—my—precious soul! What a cursed scamp! What a most infernal black—Who is it?"

"No *blackguard*, sir," interrupted Gammon, sternly; "but—a gentleman, perhaps, even, every way equal to yourself," he added with a cruel smile, "the Honourable Mr Delamere, the son and heir of Lord De la Zouch."

"By jingo! you don't say so! Why, he's a hundred thousand a-year," interrupted Titmouse, turning pale.

"Oh, *that* he has, at least," interposed Mr Bloodsuck, who had nearly finished a rapid and disgusting breakfast; "and two such bitter Tories, you never saw or heard of before—for, like father, like son."

"Egad is it?" inquired Titmouse, completely crestfallen. Well! and what if—eh, Gammon? Isn't it?"

"It is a very serious business, sir, indeed," quoth Gammon, gravely.

"By Jove—isn't it a cursed piece of impudence! What? Come into *my* borough? He might as well come into my house! Isn't one as much mine as the other? It's as bad as housebreaking—but we're beforehand with him, any how, with those prime chaps at Gr—" Mr Bloodsuck's teeth chattered; he glanced towards the door; and Gammon gave Titmouse a look which almost paralysed, and at all events silenced him.

"They'll bleed freely?" said Bloodsuck, by-and-by, with a desperate effort to look concerned—whereas he was in a secret ecstasy at the profitable work in prospect for their house.

"Lord De la Zouch would not have entered into this thing if he had not some end in view which he considers attainable—and as for money"—

"Oh, as for that," said Bloodsuck, with a matter-of-fact air, "ten thousand pounds to him is a mere drop in the bucket."

"O Lord! O Lord! and must *I* spend money too?" inquired Titmouse, with a look of ludicrous alarm.

"We must talk this matter over

alone, Mr Bloodsuck," said Gammon anxiously—"shall we go to Grilston, or will you fetch your father hither?"

"'Pon my soul, Gammon," quoth Titmouse desperately, and snapping his finger and thumb, "those cursed Aubreys, you may depend on't, are at the bottom of all this"—

"*That* there's not the least doubt of," quoth Bloodsuck, as he buttoned up

his coat with a matter-of-fact air; but the words of Titmouse caused Mr Gammou suddenly to dart first at one, and then at the other of the speakers, a keen penetrating glance; and presently his expressive countenance showed that surprise had been succeeded by deep chagrin, which soon settled into gloomy thoughtfulness.

BOOK THE SEVENTH.

CHAPTER I.

THE GREAT GAME AT CHESS, BETWEEN MR GAMMON, AND MR CRAFTY; WHICH TYPIFIES AN ENGLISH ELECTION, AND HOW IT IS LOST, AND WON.

THERE had not been a contested election at Yatton, until the present one between Mr Delamere and Mr Titmouse, for a long series of years; its two members having been, till then, owing to the smallness of the constituency, their comparative unanimity of political sentiment, and the dominant influence of the Yatton family, returned, pretty nearly, as a matter of course. When, therefore, quiet little Yatton, for such it was, albeit politically enlarged by the new Act, became the scene of so sudden and hot a contest as that memorable and great one which I am going to describe, and under such novel and exciting circumstances, it seemed in a manner quite beside itself. The walls were everywhere covered with glaring placards—red, blue, green, yellow, white, purple—judiciously designed to stimulate the electors into a calm and intelligent exercise of their important functions. Here are the inscriptions upon a few of them:—

“Vote for TITMOUSE, the MAN of the PEOPLE !”

“TITMOUSE and CIVIL and RELIGIOUS LIBERTY !”

“TITMOUSE and CHEAP ALE !”

“TITMOUSE and PURITY of ELECTION !”

“TITMOUSE and NEGRO EMANCIPATION !”

“VOTE for TITMOUSE and No MISTAKE !”

“TITMOUSE and QUARTERLY PARLIAMENTS, VOTE BY BALLOT, and UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE !”

[‘Twas thus that the name of our little friend, like that of many others of his species, was attached to great public questions, somewhat after the manner of a kettle tied to a dog’s tail.]

But others were to be met with, of a more elaborate and impressive character. Here is one of the latter class.

“Electors of Yatton !! Be not deceived!!! The enemy is among you! Do you wish to reap the full fruits of the glorious boon lately conferred on you? Rush to the poll, and VOTE for TITMOUSE. Do you wish to see them torn from your grasp by a selfish and arrogant aristocracy? Get a pair of handcuffs, and go and vote for—MR DELAMERE!!!!”

“QUÆRE. If a certain *Borough-mongering Peer* should command his son to vote for the REPEAL of the Great Bill which enfranchised the inhabitants of Grilston, Succombe, and Warkleigh—would not that son obey him? How would this be, MR DELAMERE ?”

‘Twas not, to give the devil his due, Mr Titmouse’s fault that his placards did not contain many vulgar personalities against his opponent; but owing entirely to Mr Gammon’s want of the requisite wit, and spirit. That gentleman felt, in fact, that such a candidate as Mr Delamere afforded but few sali-

ent points of attack, in respect of either his person, his position in society, or his conduct. He also, by the way, had his placards:—

“VOTE for DELAMERE!”

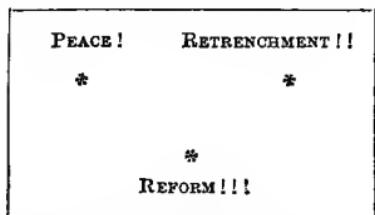
“DELAMERE and INDEPENDENCE!”

“VOTE for DELAMERE, the FARMER'S FRIEND!”

“DELAMERE, and the CONSTITUTION IN CHURCH AND STATE!”

Both the candidates established their headquarters at Grilston; Mr Delamere at the *Hare and Hounds* Inn, Mr Titmouse at the *Woodlouse*. Over the bow-window of the former streamed a noble blue banner, with an emblazonment of the Bible and Crown, and the words, CHURCH, KING, and CONSTITUTION—OLD ENGLAND FOR EVER!”

Over Mr Titmouse's Committee-room hung an immense yellow banner with three stars, thus—



(being the “Three Polar Stars” spoken of in Mr Titmouse's Address), and the words — “PEACE! RETRENCHMENT!! REFORM!!!” were printed in immense gilt letters. The walls and windows of each Inn were, moreover, covered with vari-coloured placards—but I shall not weary the reader by attempting to describe in detail the humours of a country election, which have employed, already, thousands of able and graphic pens and pencils.

Surely, what else are they, than the sticks and straws which float along the eddying and roughened surface? The whole mass of water is moving along; and our object should be rather to discover its depth, force, and direction. Principles are in conflict; the fate of the nation is, in a measure, involved in those stirred during a popular election. Such matters as I have alluded to, are but the laughable devices resorted to, in order to delude

the grinning vulgar, and disguise the movements of those calm and calculating persons who are playing the deep game of politics. Under cover of a ludicrous hubbub, might be observed, for instance, in this little borough subject to certain petty local disturbing forces, a real struggle for ascendancy between the monarchical and democratical principle; between rampant innovation, and obstinate immobility; between the wealthy few, and the many poor; between property, and ability.

If anything like this were the case, how many of the electors, new or old, of Yatton (who may perhaps be compared to chessmen, in the hands of long-headed players)—knew any more about the matter than a private soldier at Waterloo thought of, comprehended, or appreciated, the complicated and mighty schemes of a Wellington or Napoleon, whose bidding he was doing, or of the prodigious consequences attached to the success or failure of either? Some people talk vehemently about the paramount necessity for educating the lower classes. It is, indeed, of incalculable importance that they should be instructed; but is it not of still greater importance that the UPPER CLASSES should be instructed, it only on account of their being the holders of that PROPERTY, in greater or less proportions, with its inseparable power and influence, which, directly or indirectly, determines all the movements of the state? Could universal suffrage be supposed to exist consistently with the preservation of social order—of society—it would still be impossible to extirpate or effectually to counteract the influence of property, in whose hands soever it might be placed. Pluck out of the vilest of the bellowing bullies surrounding the hustings, him, of course a non-elector, most conspicuous for his insolence and brutality; imagine him suddenly or gradually become the owner of a great, or a small property, with the influence it gives him over customers, tenants, dependents: do you suppose that he will not at once, either gently or roughly, accord-

ing to his temper, begin to exercise his power, that which is so dear to the heart of man, by dictating the exercise of the elective franchise, on behalf of those political opinions which he may himself happen to favour? Is not this the man to instruct, and the better, in proportion to the extent of his real influence? Except in those brief and horrid intervals of social convulsion, in which *δικαιονομία ταύτη ταῦτα στρεψίλατο*, however popularised and extended may apparently be the system of electing parliamentary representatives, those who really return members to the House of Commons, whether themselves actually electors or not, and whether directly or indirectly—be the holders of property, in villages, in towns, in cities, in boroughs, and counties. The influence of property is, in truth, inevitable as that of gravitation: and losing sight of this, people may split their heads in vain, and chatter till the arrival of the Greek kalends, about extending further and further the elective franchise, shortening Parliaments and voting by ballot. Whether it ought to be so, signifies little, when we know that it is, and will be so. We have entered upon an era of the world's history, with which no former one can be for an instant compared, if only with reference to the immense development of human intelligence, and the awakening among all men of the sense of political rights, and individual political power. This is a proud but perilous reality; awakening profound anxiety in the mind of every thoughtful person, and forcing upon him the conviction, that the only safeguard against the approach of dangerous times, menacing the very existence of civilisation, is the spread of enlightened education—by which is meant, moral and religious, as well as secular instruction. But surely now it is time to return to the Yatton election; and if I be but this once forgiven, I will not diverge again, in a hurry, from the main course of events.

Lord De la Zouch, who resided some eight or ten miles from Yatton, soon discovered, as also did sundry other

able and experienced electioneering friends, taking an interest in his son's success, that the movements of the enemy were directed by a strong and skilful band; and which never could be that of—*Mr Titmouse*. However slight and faint may be the hopes of success with which a man enters into an interesting and important undertaking, they soon begin to increase and brighten with eager action; and it was so with Lord De la Zouch. He was not long in tracing the powerful, but cautiously concealed agency of our friend Mr Gammon. One or two such dangerous and artful snares were detected by the watchful and practised eyes of his lordship and his friends, just in time to prevent Delamere from being seriously compromised, as satisfied them that good Mr Parkinson, with all his bustle, energy, and heartiness, was dreadfully overmatched by his astute opponent, Mr Gammon; and that in the hands of Mr Parkinson, the contest would become, so far as Delamere was concerned, a painful and ridiculous farce. A council of war, therefore, was called at Fotheringham Castle; the result of which was an express being sent off to London, to bring down immediately a first-rate electioneering agent, MR CRAFTY, and place in his hands the entire management of Mr Delamere's cause.

Mr Crafty was between forty and forty-five years old. His figure, of middle height, was very spare. He was always dressed in a plain suit of black, with white neckerchief, and no shirt collar; yet no one that knew the world could mistake him for a dissenting minister!—He was calm and phlegmatic in his manner, and movements; there was not, in fact, a particle of passion or feeling in his composition. He was a mere thinking machine, in perfect order. He was of marvellous few words. His face was thin and angular. His chin and temples formed an isosceles triangle; his chin being peaked, and his forehead broad. His hair was dark, and cut almost as close as that of a foot-soldier—and this it was which helped to give his counte-

nance that expression, both quaint and unaffected, which, once observed, was not likely to be soon forgotten. His eye was blue, and intensely cold and bright—his complexion fresh; he had no whiskers; there was a vanishing expression of sarcasm about the corners of his mouth. Everything about him bespoke a man cold, cautious, acute, matter-of-fact. Business was written all over his face. He had devoted himself to electioneering tactics, and might be said to have reduced them, indeed, to a science. No one could say whether he was of Whig or Tory politics; my impression is, that he cared not a straw for either.—This, then, was the formidable man who was to be pitted against the no less formidable Gammon: and these two gentlemen may perhaps be looked upon as the real players, whose backers were—Delamere, and Titmouse.

Mr Crafty soon made his appearance at Yatton; and seemed, in a manner, to have dropped into Mr Delamere's committee-room, from the clouds. His presence did not appear quite unexpected; yet no one seemed to know why, whence, or at whose instance he had come. He never went near Fotheringham, nor ever mentioned the name of its noble owner, who, however, contemplated the accession of Crafty with feelings of calm exultation and confidence. Mr Delamere's "committee" was instantly disbanded, and no new one named. In fact, there was to be none at all; and Mr Titmouse's friends were, for a while, led to believe that the enemy were already beginning to beat a retreat. A quiet banker at Grilston, and a hard-headed land-surveyor and agent of the same place, were alone apparently taken into Mr Crafty's confidence. Mr Parkinson, even, was sent to the right about; and his rising pique and anger were suddenly quelled by the steadfast, significant, but smiling look with which Mr Crafty observed, in dismissing him—"It won't do." Adjoining, and opening into the large room in which, till Mr Crafty's arrival, Mr Delamere's committee had been sitting, was a

small one; and in it Mr Crafty established his headquartera. He came, accompanied—though no one for a while knew it—by three of his familiars; right trusty persons, in sooth! One always sat on a chair, at the outside of the door leading into Mr Crafty's room, over which he kept guard as a sentinel, and never spoke to anybody. The other two disposed themselves according to orders.

Mr Gammon soon felt the presence of his cautious and skilful opponent, in the total change—the quiet system—that became all of a sudden apparent in the enemy's tactics. His watchful eye and quick perception detected, here and there, the faint vanishing traces of a sly and stealthy foot—the evidences of an experienced electioneering tactician; and at length, one morning, early, he caught a glimpse of Mr Crafty, with whose name and fame he was familiar, and returned home with a grave consciousness that the contest had become one exceedingly serious; that—so to speak—he must instantly spread out every stitch of canvass to overtake the enemy. In short, he made up his mind for mischief, as soon as he gave Lord De la Zouch credit for being resolved to win; and felt the necessity for acting with equal caution and decision. During that day he obtained an advance from a neighbouring banker of two thousand pounds, on the security of a deposit of a portion of the title-deeds of the Yatton property. He had, indeed, occasion for great resources, personal as well as pecuniary; for instance—he had reason to believe that the enemy had already penetrated to his stronghold, the **QUAINT CLUB** at Grilston, for such was the name of the club into which the one hundred and nine new voters, all good men and true, at Grilston had formed themselves. Though Gammon had agreed, after much negotiation, to buy them at the liberal sum of ten pounds ahead, he had reason, shortly after the arrival of Mr Crafty, to believe that they had been tampered with, for, as he was late one evening moodily walking up to the Hall, he overtook, in the park, a man whose person he

did not at first recognise in the darkness, but whose fearfully significant motions soon insured him recognition. It was, in fact, the man who had hitherto treated with him on behalf of the Quaint Club ; one Benjamin Bran, commonly called *Ben Bran*, a squat, bow-legged baker, of Grilston. He uttered not a word, nor did Mr Gammon ; but, on being recognised, simply held up to that gentleman his two outstretched hands, *twice*, with a significant and inquiring look. Gammon gazed at him for a moment with fury ; and muttering—"to-morrow—here—same hour!" hurried on to the Hall in a state of direful perplexity and alarm. The dilemma in which he felt himself, kept him awake half the night ! When once, indeed, you come to this sort of work, you are apt to give your opponent credit for deeper manœuvring than you can at the time fathom ; and the fate of the battle may soon be rendered really doubtful. Then, everything—inclusive of serious consequences, extending far beyond the mere result of the election—depends upon the skill, temper, and experience of the real and responsible directors of the election.

Was Ben Bran's appearance a move on the part of Crafty ? Had that gentleman bought him over and converted him into a spy—was he now playing the traitor ? Or was the purse of Titmouse to be *bona fide* measured against that of Lord De la Zouch ? That would be dreadful ! Gammon felt, to compare him for a moment to an animal with which he had some kindred qualities, much like a cat on a high wall, topped with broken glass, afraid to stir in any direction, and yet unable to continue where he was. While the two candidates, attended by their sounding bands, and civil and smiling friends, were making their public demonstrations and canvassing the electors, as if thereby they exercised, or believed that they were exercising, the slightest possible influence over one single voter on either side ; as I have already intimated, the battle was being fought by two calm and clear heads, in two

quiet little rooms in Grilston—one at the Hare and Hounds, the other at the Woodlouse Inn ; of course I mean Mr Crafty, and Mr Gammon. The former within a few hours saw that the issue of the struggle lay with the Quaint Club ; and from one of his trusty emissaries—a man whom no one ever saw in communication with him, who was a mere stranger in Grilston, indifferent as to the result of the election, but delighting in its frolics ; who was peculiarly apt, or at least appeared, to get sooner drunk than any one he drank with — Mr Crafty discovered, that though the enlightened members of the Quaint Club had certainly formed a predilection for the principles of Mr Titmouse, yet they possessed a candour disposing them to bear all that might be advanced in favour of the principles of his opponent.

Mr Crafty's first step was to ascertain what had been already done or attempted on behalf of Mr Delamere, and also of Mr Titmouse ; and then the exact number of voters, whom he carefully classified. He found that there were four hundred who might be expected to poll ; the new electors amounting in number to one hundred and sixty, the old, to two hundred and forty, and principally scot-and-lot voters. In due time he ascertained, that of the former class only *thirty-six* could be relied upon for Mr Delamere. The tenants of the Yatton property within the borough amounted to one hundred and fifteen. They had been canvassed by Mr Delamere and his friends with great delicacy ; and twenty-thrice of them had voluntarily pledged themselves to vote for him, and risk all consequences ; intimating that they hated and despised their new landlord as much as they had loved their old one, whose principles they understood to be those of Mr Delamere. Then there remained a class of "*accessibles*," to adopt the significant language of Mr Crafty, in number one hundred and twenty-five. These were persons principally resident in and near Yatton, subject undoubtedly to strong and direct in-

fluence on the part of Mr Titmouse, but still not absolutely at his command. Of these, no fewer than seventy had pledged themselves in favour of Mr Delamere; and, in short, thus stood Mr Crafty's calculations as to the probable force on both sides:—

DELAMERE.

New Voters,	:	:	:	:	36
Yatton Tenants,	:	:	:	:	23
Accessibles,	:	:	:	:	70

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TITMOUSE.

New Voters—						
Quaint Club,	:	:	:	:	109	
Others,	:	:	:	:	21	
					130	
Tenants,	:	:	:	:	92	
Accessibles,	:	:	:	:	35	
					257	

Now, of the class of accessibles, twenty remained yet unpledged, and open to conviction; and, moreover, both parties had good ground for believing that they would all be convinced one way—*i. e.* towards either Mr Titmouse, or Mr Delamere. Now, if the Quaint Club could be in any way detached from Mr Titmouse, it would leave him with a majority of seventeen, only, over Mr Delamere; and then, if by any means the twenty accessibles could be secured for Mr Delamere, he would be placed in a majority of three over his opponent. Whichever way they went, however, it was plain that the Quaint Club held the election in their own hands, and intended to keep it so. Gammon's calculations differed but slightly from those of Crafty; and thenceforth both directed their best energies towards the same point, the Quaint Club—going on all the while with undiminished vigour and assiduity with their canvass, as the best mode of diverting attention from their important movements, and satisfying the public that the only weapons with which the fight was to be won were—bows, smiles, civil speeches, placards, squibs, banners, and bands of music. Mr Crafty had received a splendid sum for his services from Lord De la Zouch; but on the first distinct and peremptory intimation

from his lordship, being conveyed to him through Mr Delamere, that there was to be, *bonâ fide*, no bribery—and that the only funds placed at his disposal were those sufficient for the legitimate expenses of the election, he smiled rather bitterly, and sent off a secret express to Fotheringham, to ascertain for what his services had been engaged—since what was the use of going to Waterloo without powder? The answer he received was laconic enough, and verbatim as follows:—

"No intimidation; no treating; no bribery; manœuvre as skilfully as you can; and watch the enemy night and day, so that the close of the poll may not be the close of the election, nor the victor there, the sitting member."

To the novel, arduous, and absurd duty, defined by this despatch from headquarters—and highly absurd Mr Crafty thought it, he immediately addressed all his energies; and, after carefully reconnoitring his position, unpromising as it was, did not absolutely despair of success. All his own voters had been gained, upon the whole, fairly. The thirty-six new ones had been undoubtedly under considerable influence, of an almost inevitable kind indeed—inasmuch as they consisted of persons principally employed in their respective ways of business by Lord De la Zouch, and many of his friends and neighbours, all of whom were of his lordship's way of political thinking. Every one of the twenty-three tenants had given a spontaneous and cordial promise; and the seventy "accessibles" had been gained, after an earnest and persevering canvass, by Mr Delamere, in company with others who had a pretty decisive, but still a legitimate, influence over them. The remaining twenty might, possibly, though not probably, be secured by equally unobjectionable means. That being the state of things with Delamere, how stood matters with Mr Titmouse? First and foremost, the Quaint Club had been bought at ten pounds ahead, by Gammon—that was all certain. Crafty would also have bought them like a flock of sheep, had

he been allowed, and would have managed matters effectually and secretly; yet not more so than he found Mr Gammon had succeeded in doing; at all events, as far as that gentleman himself, personally, was concerned. In fact, he had foiled Mr Crafty, when that astute person looked about in search of legal evidence of what he knew had been done. Nevertheless, he did not despair of being able to perform a series of manœuvres which should secure one of the ends he most wished, in respect even of the Quaint Club.

With equal good intentions, but actuated by a *zeal that was not according to knowledge*, some of Mr Gammon's coadjutors had not imitated his circumspection. Quite unknown to him, one or two had fearfully committed him, themselves, and Mr Titmouse; giving Mr Gammon such accounts of their doings as they conceived would serve only to secure his applause for their tact and success. Before Mr Crafty, however, they stood detected as blundering novices in the art of electioneering. A small tinker and brazier at Warkleigh had received, with a wink, ten pounds from a member of Mr Titmouse's committee! in payment of an old outstanding account, heaven save the mark! delivered in by him, three years before, for mending pots, kettles, and saucepans, in the time of—the Aubreys! The wife of a tailor at Grilston received fifteen pounds for a fine tom-cat, which was a natural curiosity, since it could wink each eye separately and successively. A third worthy and independent voter was reminded that he had lent the frank applicant for his vote ten pounds several years before, and which that gentleman now took shame to himself, as he paid the amount, for having so long allowed to remain unpaid. Mr Barnabas Bloodsuck, with superior astuteness, gave four pounds a-piece to three little boys, happening to be sons of a voter whose workshop overlooked Messrs Bloodsuck's hack offices; on condition that they would desist from their trick of standing and putting their thumbs to their noses, and

extending their fingers towards him, as he sat in his office, and which had really become an insupportable nuisance. Here was, therefore, a valuable consideration for the payment, and bribery was out of the question! Such are samples of the ingenious devices which had been resorted to, in order to secure some thirty or forty votes! In short, Mr Crafty caught them tripping in at least eleven unquestionable cases of bribery, each supported by unimpeachable evidence, and each sufficing to avoid the election, to disqualify Mr Titmouse from sitting in that Parliament for Yatton, and to subject both him and his agents to a ruinous amount of penalties. Then, again, there were clear indications either of a disposition to set at defiance the stringent provisions of the law against TREATING, or ignorance of their existence. And as for freedom of election, scarcely ten of his tenants gave him a willing vote, or otherwise than upon compulsion, and after threats of raised rents or expulsion from farms. Tied as were Mr Crafty's hands, the Quaint Club became a perfect eyesore to him. He found means, however, to open a secret and confidential communication with them, and resolved to hold out to them dazzling but indistinct hopes of pecuniary advantage from the regions of Fotheringham. His emissary soon got hold of the redoubtable Ben Bran, who, truth to say, had long been on the look-out for indications of the desired sort, from the other side. As Bran was late one evening walking slowly alone along the high-road leading to York, he was accosted by a genteel-looking person, who spoke in a low tone, and whom Bran now recollects to have seen, or spoken to, before. "Can you tell me where lies the gold mine?" said the stranger; "at Fotheringham, or Yatton?"—and the speaker looked round, apprehensive of being overheard. Ben pricked up his ears, and soon got into conversation with the mysterious stranger; in the course of which the latter threw out, in a very significant manner, that "a certain peer could never be supposed to send

a certain near relative into the field, in order that that relative might be beaten, * * * and especially for want of a few pounds; and besides, my friend, when only—* *—eh?—* *—*the other side*”—

“Why, who are you? Where do you come from?” inquired Ben, with a violent start.

“Dropped out of the—*moon*,” was the quiet and smiling answer.

“Then I must say they know a precious deal,” replied Ben, after a troubled pause, “up there, of what’s going on down here!”

“To be sure, everything; everything!” * * Here the stranger told Ben the precise sum which the club had received from Mr Gammon.

“Are we both—gentlemen?” inquired the stranger earnestly.

“Y—e—e—s, I hope so, sir,” replied Ben hesitatingly.

“And men of business—men of our word?”

“Honour among thieves—ay, ay,” answered Ben in a still lower tone, and very eagerly.

“Then let you and me meet alone, this time to-morrow, at Darkling Edge; and by that time, do you see, turn this over in your mind,” here the stranger twice held up both his hands, with outstretched thumbs and fingers. “Sure we understand each other?” he added. Ben nodded, and they were presently out of sight of each other. The stranger immediately pulled off his green spectacles, and also a pair of grey whiskers, and put both of them into his pocket. If any one attempted to *dog* him, he must have been led a pretty round! ‘Twas in consequence of this interview that Ben made the application to Gammon, which had so disturbed him, and which has been already described. And to return to our friend: what was he to do? On entering the library at the Hall, he opened a secret drawer, in his desk, and took out a thin slip of paper which he had deposited there that morning, it having been then received by him from town, marked “*Private and Confidential*,” and franked “Blossom and Box.” ‘Twas but a line, and written

in a bold hand, but in evident haste; for it had in fact been penned by Lord Blossom and Box while he was sitting in the Court of Chancery. This is a copy of it:—

“The election must be won. You will hear from E— by this post. Don’t address any note to *me*, “B. and B.”

With this great man, Lord Chancellor Blossom and Box, when plain Mr Quicksilver, Mr Gammon had had a pretty familiar acquaintance, as the reader may easily suppose; and had a natural desire to acquit himself creditably in the eyes of so distinguished and powerful a personage. Gammon had volunteered an assurance to his lordship, shortly before leaving town, that the election was safe, and in his (Gammon’s) hands; guess, then, his chagrin and fury at finding the systematic and determined opposition which had suddenly sprung up against him; and the intensity of his desire to defeat it. And the more anxious he was on this score, the more vividly he perceived the necessity of acting with a caution which should insure real ultimate success, instead of a mere noisy and temporary triumph, afterwards to be converted into galling, disgraceful, and public defeat. The more that Gammon reflected on the sudden but determined manner in which Lord De la Zouch had entered into the contest, the more confident he became that his lordship had an important ultimate object to secure; and that he had at command immense means of every description, Gammon but too well knew, in common with all the world. Was, for instance, Mr Crafty brought down, at an enormous expense, for nothing? What the deuce were the Quaint Club about? Was ever anything so monstrous heard of? Ten pounds a man actually received—the bargain finally struck—and now their original demand suddenly and peremptorily doubled? Venal miscreants! Were his opponents really outbidding him, or laying a deep plan for entrapping him into an act of wholesale bribery? In short, were the Quaint

Club now actuated by avarice, or treachery?

Again and again did he go over his list of promises; having marked the favourable, hostile, neutral, doubtful, from a table as accurately compiled and classified as that of Mr Crafty. Like his wily and practised opponent, also, Gammon intrusted his principal movements to scarce a soul of those who were engaged with him; fearing, indeed, though then with no definite grounds, that Messrs Mudflint, Woodlouse, Centipede, Bloodsuck, and Going Gone, were already too deep in the secrets of the election. According to his calculations, supposing all his promises to stand, Titmouse was, independently of the Quaint Club, and some eighteen or twenty others whom he had set down as "to be had"—only twenty-five ahead of Delamere; thus making a difference of eight only between Gammon's reckoning, and that of Crafty. Of course, therefore, that cursed Quaint Club had it all their own way; and how to jockey them was a problem which well-nigh split his head. He gave Lord De la Zonch credit for being prepared to do all that he—Gammon—would do, to win the election; and believed him, therefore, capable of buying over any number of the club, to turn king's evidence against their original benefactor. The Bloodsucks assured him that the club were all good men and true—stanch—game to the backbone; but Gammon had obtained some information as to the political sentiments of several of the members, before, having acquired the new franchise, they had become banded into so formidable a confederacy, which led him to speculate rather apprehensively on the effects likely to follow any bold and skilful scheme resorted to by his enemies.

Now, as far as the club were concerned, its members were quiet respectable men, who made the affair a dry matter of business. They justly looked on each of the candidates as doubtless equally worthy of the honour they coveted, of representing the borough; and considered that things

would always go on right, at headquarters—*i. e.* that the country would be properly governed—without the least reference to the quality or complexion of the House of Commons. They saw the desperate and unceasing fight amongst their betters for the loaves and fishes; and imitated their example, with reference to the crumbs and fragments. First they divided themselves, as near as their number would admit of, into tens, giving one to the odd nine, equally with each body of ten, and thus produced a body of eleven representatives. These eleven, again, in the presence of the whole club, chose five of their number for the purpose of conducting the negotiations between the club and the two candidates; and these five again selected one of themselves—Ben Bran—to be the direct medium of communication; the actual state of the market never went beyond the first body of eleven; and in the exercise of an extreme dexterity, Mr Crafty had contrived to inspire these eleven, through their deputy and mouthpiece, Bran, with a determination to exact fifteen pounds per head more from Titmouse, before recording their votes in his favour: and this untoward state of things was duly intimated to Gammon, by Ben Bran's silently outstretching both hands, and then one hand. That would make a total of two thousand seven hundred and twenty-five pounds disbursed among that accursed Quaint Club alone!—thought Gammon with a shudder: and suppose they should even then turn tail upon him, seduced by the splendid temptations of Lord De la Zouch? Just to conceive the possibility, for one moment, of Mr Benjamin Bran having been bought over to betray all his companions, and Gammon and his party also, into the hands of Lord De la Zouch? Saith the immortal author of *Hudibras*—

"Ah me, what perils do environ
The man that meddles with cold iron!"

But Gammon was disposed to make an exclamation in a similar tone, though of a different sort—

What pen his troubles shall describe,
Who voters once begins to bribe !

"Oh!" thought he, a thousand times, "that cursed Quaint Club!—That cursed Crafty!"

The first person on whom Delamere waited, in order to solicit his support was little Dr Tatham, who, I need hardly say, gave it promptly and cordially; but he added, shaking his head, that he knew he was giving huge offence to the people at the Hall, who had already been several times very urgent indeed with him. "Well, rather, sir, than sow dissension between you and Mr Titmouse, your neighbour," said Delamere spiritedly, "I at once release you from your promise."

"Ah! indeed?" cried Dr Tatham briskly—"Do you? Can you? Ought you to do so? I look upon the exercise of my franchise to be a sacred duty, and I shall discharge it as readily and as conscientiously as any other duty, come what may." Delamere looked at him, and thought how often he had heard Miss Aubrey talk of him with affectionate enthusiasm, and he believed the little Doctor to be every way worthy of it. "For myself," continued Dr Tatham, "I care little; but I have reason greatly to apprehend the effects of Mr Titmouse's displeasure upon those who are disposed—as such I know there are—to go counter to his wishes. He'll make them rue the day"—

"Ay?—Let him!" exclaimed Mr Delamere, with an eye of bright defiance; but it kindled only a faint momentary spark of consolation in the breast of Dr Tatham.

The rivals, Mr Delamere and Mr Titmouse, encountered one another, as it were in full state, on the second day of the former's canvass. 'Twas in the street. Mr Delamere was attended by Mr Parkinson, Sir Percival Pickering, Mr St Aubyn, Mr Aylward Elvet, Mr Gold, and one or two others. Mr Delamere looked certainly very handsome. About his person, countenance, and carriage, there was an air of manly frankness, refinement, and simplicity; and a glance at his aris-

tocratic cast of features, told you that a certain latent tendency to hauteur was kept in check by sincere good-nature. He was tall and well-proportioned, and his motions had a natural ease and grace; and as for his dress, it combined a rigid simplicity with an undoubted fashion and elegance. Though the air was cold and frosty, he wore only a plain dark-coloured surtout, buttoned.

"Delamere! Delamere!" whispered, with a smile, Mr St Aubyn, one of the former members for the borough, on first catching sight of the enemy, approaching them on the same side of the street, at about twenty yards distance—"Here comes your opponent; he's a little beauty, eh?"

Mr Titmouse walked first, dressed in a fine drab-coloured great-coat, with a small cape and velvet collar of the same hue, and sable, nearly a foot deep, at the wrists. His coat was buttoned tightly round a pinched-in waist, and a white cambric handkerchief peeped out of a pocket in the breast. He had a red and green plaid waistcoat, and a full satin stock, glistening with little pins and chains. His trousers were sky-blue, and very tight, and covered almost the whole of his boot; so that it was a wonder to the vulgar how he ever got into, or out of the aforesaid boots. The little that was seen of them, shone wonderfully; and he wore spurs at his heels. His span-new glossy hat was perched aslant on his bushy hair; he wore lemon-coloured kid gloves, and carried a delicate little ebony cane. Following this dazzling figure were—the sallow insolent-looking "*Reverend*" Smirk Mudflint, such was the title he assumed, Mr Centipede, Mr Grogram, Mr Bloodsuck, junior, (who had approached as near, in point of personal appearance, to his illustrious client, as he knew how, and his means would admit) and—Mr Gammon. As the hostile companies neared each other, that of Delamere observed some one hastily whisper to Titmouse, who instantly stuck his chased gold eye-glass into his eye, and stared with great impudence at Mr Delamsrc—who,

nevertheless, on passing him, with the courtesy which he conceived due to an opponent, took off his hat, and courteously bowed, his example being followed by all his party. Titmouse, however, took not the least notice of the compliment; but, without removing his glass from his eye, throwing an odious sneer into his face, stared steadily at Mr Delamere, and so passed on. Mr Barnabas Bloodsuck ably seconded him. Mudflint, with a bitter smirk, touched his hat slightly; Centipede affected to look another way; Grogram blushed, and bowed as to his best customer. Mr Gammon came last; and, filled with disgust at the reception given to Mr Delamere, coloured all over, as he took off his hat, and with an expression of anxious and pointed politeness, endeavoured to satisfy Mr Delamere and his party, that there was at all events one in the train of Titmouse, who had some pretensions to the manners of a gentleman.

"Who can that last man be? He's a gentleman," inquired Sir Percival with an air of much surprise.

"Mr Gammon—a man who is lord paramount at the Hall," replied one.

"Gammion!—Is *that* Mr ——" echoed Delamere, with much interest; and as he turned round to look at Gammon, observed that he was doing the same; on which both hastily turned away.

As the important day approached, each party professed complete confidence as to the result. The Yorkshire Stingo declared that it had authority for stating that Mr Titmouse's majority would be at least three to one over Mr Delamere—and that, too, in glorious defiance of the most lavish bribery and corruption, and the most

tyrannical intimidation, which had ever disgraced the annals of electioneering. In fact, it was presumptuous in Mr Delamere to attempt to foist himself upon a borough with which he had no connection; and had been done with a wanton and malicious determination to occasion expense and annoyance to Mr Titmouse. The York True Blue, on the contrary, assured its readers that Mr Delamere's prospects were of a cheering description—and though by perhaps a small majority, yet he was sure of his election. He had been everywhere hailed with the greatest enthusiasm. Many of even Mr Titmouse's tenantry had nobly volunteered their support to Mr Delamere; and at Grilston, so long regarded as the focus and hotbed of democracy, his success had surpassed the most sanguine expectations of his friends, and so forth. Then there was a sly and mischievous caution to the electors, not to be led away by the ingenious and eloquent sophistries which might be expected to fall from Mr Titmouse at the hustings, on the day of nomination!! All this might be very well for the papers, and probably produce its impression upon those who, at a distance, are in the habit of relying upon them. But as for the actors—the parties concerned—Mr Delamere was repeatedly assured by Mr Crafty that a decent minority was the utmost that could be expected; while Titmouse and his friends, on the other hand, were in a painful state of uncertainty as to the issue: only Gammon, however, and perhaps one or two others, being acquainted with the true source of uneasiness and difficulty—viz. the abominable rapacity of the Quaint Club.

CHAPTER II.

THE DAY OF BATTLE ARRIVES.

At length dawned the day which was to determine how far Yatton was worthy or unworthy of the boon which had been conferred upon it by the glorious Bill for giving Everybody Everything: which was to witness the maiden contest between the two hopeful scions of the noble and ancient houses of Dredlington and De la Zonch—on which it was to be ascertained whether Yatton was to be bought and sold, like any other article of merchandise, by a bitter oldboroughmonger; or to signalise itself by its spirit and independence, in returning one who avowed, and would support, the noble principles which secured the passing of the Great Bill, which has been so often alluded to. As for my hero, Mr Titmouse, it gives me pain to have to record, making even all due allowance for the excitement occasioned by so exhilarating an occasion, that during the canvass, there were scarcely two hours in the day during which he could be considered as sober. He generally left his bed about eleven o'clock in the morning, about two o'clock reaching his committee-room, where he called for a bottle or two of soda-water, with brandy; and, thus supported, set out on his canvass, and rarely refused an invitation to take a little ale, at the houses which he visited. About the real business of the election, his own true position and prospects—Gammon never once deigned to consult or instruct him; but had confined himself to the preparation of a short and simple speech, to be delivered by Titmouse, if possible, from the hustings, and which he had made that gentle-

man copy out many times, and promise that he would endeavour to learn off by heart. But Mr Titmouse might as well have attempted to walk up the outside of the Monument!

Merrily rang the bells of Grilston church, on the election morning, by order of the vicar, the Reverend Gideon Fleshpot, who was a stanch Titmousian, and had long cast a sort of sheep's eye upon the living of Yatton; for he was nearly twenty years younger than its present possessor, Dr Tat-ham. What a bustle was there in the town by eight o'clock! All business was suspended for the day. Great numbers from the places adjacent began to pour into the town about that hour. It was soon seen who was the popular candidate—he whose colours were yellow; for wherever you went, yellow cockades, rosettes, and buttonies for the men, and yellow ribbons for the girls, yellow flags and yellow placards, with "TITMOUSE FOR YATTON!" met the eye. Mr Delamere's colours were a deep blue, but worn, I am sorry to say, by only one in four or five of those who were stirring about; and who, moreover, though in appearance of far superior respectability to the adherents of Titmouse, yet wore no such look of confidence and cheerfulness as they. From the bow-window of the Hare and Hounds, streamed an ample and rich blue silk banner, on which was worked, in white silk, the figure of a Bible, Crown, and Sceptre, and the words "CHURCH, KING, AND CONSTITUTION!" "Old England for ever!" This would have probably secured some little favourable notice from even his sullen

and bitter opponents, had they known it to have been the workmanship of some fifteen as beautiful girls as could have been picked out of the whole county of York; and, by the way, 'tis a singular and melancholy sign of the times, that beauty, innocence, and accomplishment, are in England to be found uniformly arrayed on the side of tyranny and corruption against the people! Then Mr Delamere's band was equal to three such as that of his opponent—playing with equal precision and power: and, what was more, they played bold, enlivening tunes as they paraded the town. There was one feature of the early proceedings of the day, that was rather singular and significant: viz. that though all the members of the formidable QUAIN'T CLUB were stirring about, not one of them wore the colours of either party, though (between ourselves) each man had the colours of both parties in his pocket. They appeared studiously to abstain from a display of party feeling—though several of them could not resist a leering wink of the eye when the yellow band went clashing past them. They also had a band, which went about the town, preceded by their own standard—a broad sheet of light green calico, stretched between two poles, supported by two men; and the droll device it bore, was—an enormous man's face, with an intense squint, and two hands, with the thumbs of each resting on the nose, and the fingers spread out towards the beholder. It produced, as it seemed designed to produce, shouts of laughter wherever it made its appearance. Every member of the Quaint Club, however, wore a grave face: as if they were the only persons who appreciated the nature of the exalted functions which they were entitled, and about, to exercise. No one could tell which way they intended to vote, though all expected that they were to come in at the last, and place the yellows in a triumphant majority of a hundred, at least. Though it had been a matter of notoriety that they were Mr Titmouse's men, before Mr Delamere appeared in the field; yet,

since then, they had suddenly exhibited a politic and persevering silence and reserve, even among their personal friends and acquaintance. The yellow band performed one feat, greatly applauded by the yellow crowd which attended them, and evidenced the delicacy by which those who guided their movements were actuated: viz. they frequently passed and repassed Mr Delamere's committee-room, playing that truly inspiriting air, "The Rogue's March." Then the yellows dressed up a poor old donkey in Mr Delamere's colours, which were plentifully attached to the animal's ears and tail, and paraded him, with great cheering, before the doors of the Hare and Hounds, and Mr Delamere's principal friends and adherents. Nay—one of the more vivacious of the crowd threw a stone at a little corner window of the blue committee-room, through which it went smashing on its way, till it hit and overturned the inkstand of calm Mr Crafty, who sat alone in the little room, busy writing. He looked up for a moment, called for a fresh inkstand, and presently resumed his pen, as if nothing had happened.

The hustings were erected upon a convenient and commodious green, at the southern extremity of the town; and thither might be seen, first on its way, a little after eleven o'clock, the procession of the popular candidate—Mr Titmouse. Here and there might be heard, as he passed, the startling sounds of mimic ordnance, fired by little boys from house-tops. As they passed the church, its bells rang their merriest peal: and at a little distance further on, the boys of Mr Hic Hæc Hoc, each with a small yellow rosette, tied to his jacket, struck up a squeaking and enthusiastic "hurr-ay!" while from the upper windows, the young ladies, three in number, and also with yellow rosettes, of Mrs Hic Hæc Hoc's "establishment," waved their little white pocket-handkerchiefs. Next on their way, they passed the "*Reverend*" Smirk Mudflint's chapel, which was in queer contiguity to an establishment of a queer character—.

in fact, adjoining it. Against the upper part of the chapel, hung a device calculated to arrest, as it did, universal attention—viz. an inverted copy of the New Testament; over it, the figure of a church turned upside down, with the point of its steeple resting on the word “Revelation;” and upon the aforesaid church stood proudly erect an exact representation of Mr Smirk Mudflint’s chapel, over which were the words—“FREEDOM OF OPINION! and TRUTH TRIUMPHANT!” But I do not know whether another device, worked by Miss Mudflint, a skinny, tallow-faced, and flinty-hearted young lady of nine-and-twenty, was not still more striking and original; viz. a Triangle, and an Eye with rays in the midst of it, with the words—“Titmouse! Truth! Peace!” Three cheers for Mr Mudflint were given here; and he bowed all round with an air of proud excitement—feeling, moreover, an intense desire to stop the procession and make a speech, while opposite to his own little dunghill.

First in the procession marched a big fellow with one eye, bearing a flag with a red cap on a pike, and the words, in large black characters—

“TITMOUSE OR DEATH!
“LET TYRANTS TREMBLE!”

Then came the band, and next to them walked—TITTLEBAT TITMOUSE, Esq., dressed exactly as he was when encountered, in his canvass, by the party of his opponent, as I have already described—only that he wore a yellow rosette, attached to a button-hole on the left side of his drab great-coat. His protuberant light blue eyes danced with delight, and his face was flushed with excitement. His hat was off, and on, every moment, as he bobbed about in acknowledgment of the universal salutations which greeted him, and so occupied him, that he even forgot to use his eye-glass. On his left hand walked, wrapped up in a plain dark-hued great-coat, a somewhat different person—Mr Gammon. The expression which his features wore was one of intense anxiety; and

any tolerably close observer might have detected the mortification and disgust with which his eye occasionally glanced at, and was as suddenly withdrawn from, the figure of the grinning idiot beside him. Who do you think, reader, walked on Mr Titmouse’s right-hand side? Could you have believed it? Sir Harkaway Rotgut Wildfire, Baronet; whose keen political feelings, added to a sincere desire to secure a chance of his daughter’s becoming the mistress of Yatton, had long ago obliterated all unkindly recollection of Mr Titmouse’s gross conduct on a former occasion, after having received, through the medium of Mr Bloodsuck, senior, as a common friend, a satisfactory apology. Next walked Mr Titmouse’s mover and seconder, the “Reverend” Mr Mudflint, and Going Gone, “Esquire.” Then came Mr Centipede and Mr Woodlouse, Mr Grogram and Mr Gimblossom; Mr Gargle Glister, Mr Barnabas Bloodsuck, and Mr Hic Hæc Hoc; followed by some two hundred of others, two and two. Thus passed along the main street of Grilston, in splendid array, what might too truly have been called the triumphal procession of the popular candidate; his progress being accompanied by the enlivening music of his band, the repeated acclamations of the excited and intelligent crowd, the waving of banners and flags below, and handkerchiefs and scarfs from the ladies at the windows, and desperate struglings from time to time, on the part of the crowd, to catch a glimpse of Mr Titmouse. Mr Gammon had the day before judiciously hired ten pounds’ worth of mob from the neighbouring village of Crackspate—a device alone sufficient to have made Mr Titmouse the popular candidate, and it now told excellently; for the aforesaid ten pounds’ worth disposed itself in truly admirable order, in front of the hustings—and, on Mr Titmouse’s making his appearance there, set up a sudden and enthusiastic shout, which rent the air, and was calculated to strike dismay into the heart of the enemy. On gaining the hustings, he changed col-

our visibly, trembled from head to foot, and, coming in front, took off his glossy hat, and bowed repeatedly in all directions. Mr Delamere's procession was of a vastly superior description, yet too palpably that of the unpopular candidate—every member of it, from first to last, having made up his mind to encounter incivility, and even insult, however really anxious to avoid the slightest occasion for it. The band was numerous, and played with infinite spirit. There was a profusion of gay and handsome flags and banners. Mr Delamere walked next to the musicians, with a gallant bearing, a gay and cheerful smile, yet oft darkened by anxiety as he perceived indubitable symptoms of a disposition to rough treatment on the part of the crowd. On his right-hand side walked Mr St Aubyn; on his left, Sir Percival Pickering. Following them came Mr Gold, the banker, and Mr Miln thorpe, an extensive and highly-respectable flour factor—these being Mr Delamere's proposer and seconder: and they were followed by at least three hundred others, two and two, all of a substantial and respectable appearance, and wearing a very resolute air, to boot. No amount of mob, that day, in Grilston, would have ventured an attack, in passing, upon that stout-hearted body of yeomen. A great many white handkerchiefs were waved from the windows, as Delamere passed along—waved by the hands of hundreds of fair creatures, whose hearts throbbed with fond fears lest an unoffending gentleman should be maltreated by the reckless mob. When Mr Delamere approached a certain prominent window, opposite to the town-hall, his heart began to beat quickly. *There* were four as beautiful and high-born young women as England could have produced, all gazing down upon him with eager and anxious looks. It was not they, however, who occasioned Mr Delamere's emotion. He knew that in that room was Lady De la Zouch—*his mother*: and he grew silent and excited as he approached it. One of the loveliest of the four, as he stopped and with respectful bow look-

ed up for an instant—Lady Alethea Lorymer—suddenly and unexpectedly stepped aside; and there stood revealed the figure of Lady De la Zouch. She would have waved her handkerchief, but that she required it to conceal her emotion. The lips of neither mother nor son moved: but their hearts uttered reciprocal benedictions—and Delamere passed on. As he approached the church, (I blush to have to record it), but, at the bidding of the Reverend Gideon Fleshpot, the bells tolled as for a funeral!

If the sudden and unexpected sight of his mother had been calculated in any degree to subdue, for a moment, his feelings, what ensued within a minute or two afterwards was sufficient to excite his sternest mood; for as soon as ever the head of his procession became visible to the crowd on the green, there arose a tremendous storm of yelling, hooting, hissing, and groaning: and when Mr Delamere made his appearance in front of the hustings, you might have imagined that you were witnessing the reception given to some loathsome miscreant mounting the gallows to expiate with his life a hideous crime. He advanced, nevertheless, with a smile of cheerful resolution and good-humour, though he changed colour a little; and, taking off his hat, bowed in all directions. Gracious heaven! what a contrast he presented to his popular rival, Mr Titmouse, who stood grinning and winking to the wretches immediately underneath, evidently with a spiteful gratification at the treatment which his opponent was experiencing. Any one on the hustings or in the crowd had but to call out "Three cheers for Mr Titmouse!" to be instantly obeyed; then "Three groans for the youngboroughmonger!" were responded to with amazing vehemence and effect. Viewed from a distance sufficient to prevent your observing the furious faces of the dense mob, and hearing the opprobrious epithets which were levelled against the unpopular candidate, the scene appeared both interesting and exciting. On the outskirts of the crowd were to be

seen a great number of carriages, both close and open, principally occupied by ladies—and I need hardly say who was the favourite in those quarters. Then the rival bands moved continually about, playing well-known national airs; while the banners and flags, blue and yellow, heightened the exhilarating and picturesque effect of the whole. The hustings were strong and commodious; Mr Titmouse and his friends stood on the right, Mr Delamere and his friends on the left side. He was dressed in a simple dark blue surtout and plain black stock. He was tall, elegant, and easy in his person, appearance, and gestures; his countenance was prepossessing, and bespoke a little excitement, which did not, however, obscure its good-nature. Beside him stood his proposer and seconder: the two late members; and about twenty or thirty other gentlemen—the whole party forming such a strong contrast to their opponents, as must have challenged any one's observation. Titmouse stood in the centre, leaning (as he supposed) gracefully, against the front bar; on his right stood the burly, slovenly figure of Sir Harkaway Rot-gut Wildfire, with his big, bloated, blotchy face: on Mr Titmouse's left stood his proposer, the "Reverend" Smirk Mudflint. His lean, sallow face wore a disagreeable and bitter expression, aggravated by a sinister cast of one of his eyes. He was dressed in black, with a white neckerchief and no shirt collar. Next to him stood Going Gone, Esq., Mr Titmouse's seconder, with a ruddy complexion, light hair, a droll eye, and an expression of coarse but by no means ill-natured energy. Gammon stood immediately behind Titmouse, into whose ear he whispered frequently and anxiously. There were also the Reverend Gideon Fleshpot, (though he evidently did not wish to make himself conspicuous), Mr Glister, Mr Grogram, Mr Woodlouse, Mr Centipede, Mr Ginblossom, Mr Hic Hæc Hoc, the Messrs Bloodsuck, father and son—and other "leading Liberals." The business of the day having been

opened, with the ordinary formalities, by the returning officer, he earnestly besought the assembled multitude to remember that they were Englishmen, and to give both parties fair play, allowing every one who might address them from the hustings, to be heard without serious interruption. It had been arranged between the two committees that Mr Titmouse should be first proposed; and the moment, therefore, that the returning officer ceased speaking, the "Reverend" Mr Mudflint took off his hat and prepared to address the "electors;" but he had to wait for at least three minutes, in order that the applause with which he had been greeted might subside; during which little anxious interval, he could not help directing towards his opponents a look of bitter exultation. He spoke with the self-possession, fluency, and precision of a practised public speaker. If the day's proceedings were to take their tone from that of the opening speech, 'twas a thousand pities that it had fallen to the lot of the "Reverend" Mr Mudflint to deliver it. He had so clear a voice, spoke with such distinctness and deliberation, and amidst such silence, that every word he uttered was audible all over the crowd; and anything more unchristian, uncourteous, unfair, towards his opponents, and calculated to excite towards them the hatred of the crowd, could hardly have been conceived. In what offensive and indecent terms he spoke of the Established Church and its ministers! of the aristocracy, ("those natural tyrants," he said), and indeed of all the best and time-hallowed institutions of dear glorious old England—which might, by the way, well blush to own such a creature as he, as one entitled by birth to call himself one of her sons! How he hailed the approaching downfall of "*priest-craft*" and "*king-craft!*"—"a new light," he said, "was diffusing itself over benighted mankind—'twas the pure and steady light of *REASON*, and all filthy things were flying from before it," (immense cheers followed the announcement of this important and in-

teresting fact). "The Bible," he said, "was a book of excellent common sense; and nothing but villainous priesthood had attempted to torture and dislocate it into all sorts of fantastic mysteries, which led to rank idolatry and blasphemy, equally revolting to God and man." Perceiving, from the coolness with which it was received, that this was going a little too rapidly ahead, he dropped that subject altogether, and soon regained the ear of his audience, by descanting in declamatory and inflammatory terms upon the resplendent victory which the people had recently gained in the glorious Bill for giving Everybody Everything. They had burst their bonds with a noble effort; but their chains would be quickly re riveted, unless they followed up their advantage, and never stopped short of crushing a heartless, tyrannical, and insolent oligarchy; unless the people were now true to themselves, and returned to the House of Commons men resolved to watch over the energies of reviving liberty, lest they should be strangled in"—the remainder of the sentence was inaudible in the storm of applause which it excited. "Under these circumstances, Providence itself had pointed out an individual whom he was proud and happy to propose to their notice"—here he turned and bowed to Mr Titmouse, who, plucking off his hat, bobbed in return, amidst the deafening cheers of all before them, to whom also he bowed repeatedly.—"A gentleman, continued Mr Mudflint, who seemed, as it were, made for them; who, in his own person, might be said to afford a lively illustration of the regeneration of society—who, to borrow for a moment an absurd word from his opponents, had by a sort of *miracle*, with what an infernal emphasis he pronounced this word! "been placed where he was, in his present proud position; who had totally and happily changed the whole aspect of affairs in the neighbourhood, rendering it already the scene of profuse, and yet discriminating, generosity and hospitality; who stood in bright and bold relief from out a long gloomy

line of ancestors, all of whom, he lamented to say, had lived and died in enmity to the people, and had distinguished themselves by nothing except their bigotry, and hatred of civil and religious liberty. Mr Titmouse was the first of his ancient family to claim the proud title of the—Man of the People." Here a voice called out, "Three cheers for Mr Titmouse!"—which were given spontaneously, and most effectively. "His *address* was worthy of him—it did equal honour to his head and his heart," it is impossible to describe the smile which here just glanced over the countenance of Mr Gammon, "touching nothing that it did not adorn—at once bold, explicit, comprehensive, uncompromising, and in an unique manner harmonising incompatibilities! —He had had the felicity of enjoying the acquaintance, he might venture perhaps to say, the friendship, of Mr Titmouse, since he had taken up his abode at the home of his ancestors, and very proud was he"—the aforesaid Mr Mudflint—"to be able to say so. He could assure the electors, from his own personal knowledge of Mr Titmouse, that they would have cause to be proud of their future representative—of the choice which they were about to make." Here the worthy speaker had sudden misgivings as to the display likely to be made by Titmouse, when it came to his turn to address the electors, and also caught a glimpse of Mr Gammon's countenance:—so he added in *rather* a subdued tone—"It was true that Mr Titmouse might not prove a magpie in the House, (*laughter*), a mere chatterer—much cry and little wool; they had had enough of mere speechifiers at St Stephen's—but they would have a good working member, (*cheers*); one always at his post in the hour of danger, (*cheers*); a good committee-man, and one whose princely fortune rendered him independent of party and of the blandishments of power. In the language of the ancient poet (*l.*) Mr Mudflint would exclaim on such an occasion, '*Facta, non verba quaro,*' (*great cheering*). And now a word for his opponent, (*groans*). He

was a mere puppet, held in the hands of some one out of sight, (*laughter*)—it might be of a base oldborough-monger, (*groans*)—who sought to make Yatton a rotten borough, (*hisses*), a stepping-stone to ascendancy in the county, (Cries of ‘Will he though, lad, eh?’) who would buy and sell them like slaves, (*hisses*), and never rest satisfied till he had restored the intolerable old vassalage of feudalism, (*groans* and *hisses* here burst forth from that enlightened assemblage). He meant nothing personally offensive to the honourable candidate—but was he worthy of a moment’s serious notice? (*great laughter*). Had he an opinion of his own? (*loud laughter*). Had he not better, to use the language of a book that was much misunderstood, *tarry at Jerusalem (!!!) till his beard was grown?* Was he not, in fact, a nonentity unworthy of a reasonable man’s attention? Was he not reeking from Oxford, (*groans*), that hotbed of pedantic ignorance and venerable bigotry, (*hootings*), surrounded by a dismal and lurid halo of superstition? ” (*groaning and hooting*.)

Finer and finer was Mr Mudflint becoming every moment as he warmed with his subject—with which he could have occupied himself till midnight—but unfortunately his audience was beginning unequivocally to intimate that they were quite satisfied with what they had already heard. A heartless cry, for instance, issued from the crowd—“the rest of my *discoorse* next Sunday!”—for they knew that they were being kept, all this while, from one of their greatest favourites, Mr Going Gone, who had also himself been latterly rather frequently and significantly winking his eye at those before him, and shrugging his shoulders. Mr Mudflint, therefore, with feelings of vivid vexation, pique, and envy, concluded rather abruptly by proposing TITTLEBAT TITMOUSE, ESQUIRE, of YATTON, as a fit and proper person to represent them in Parliament. Up went hats into the air, and joyous and enthusiastic shouts burst forth and continued for several minutes. Then took off his hat the jolly Mr

Going Gone—a signal for roars of laughter, and cries of coarse and droll welcome, in expectancy of fun. Noi were they disappointed. He kept them in good-humour, and indeed fits of laughter, during the whole of his “address;” and though destitute of any pretence to refinement, I must at the same time say, that there were to be detected in it no traces of ill-nature. He concluded by seconding the nomination of Mr Titmouse, amidst tumultuous cheers; and after waiting for some few minutes, in order that they might subside, Mr Gold took off his hat, and essayed to address the crowd. Now he really was, what he looked, an old man of unaffected and great good-humour, and a benevolence which was extensive, and systematic. He had only the week before distributed soup, blankets, coals, and potatoes to two hundred poor families in the borouhg, even as he had done at that period of the year, for the preceding quarter of a century. No tale of distress, indeed, was ever told him in vain, unless palpably fictitious and fraudulent. The moment that his bare head, scantily covered with grey hairs, was visible, there arose, at a given signal from Mr Barnabas Bloodsuck, a dreadful hissing, hooting, and groaning from all parts of the crowd. If he appeared disposed to persevere in addressing the two or three persons immediately around him, that only infuriated the mob against the poor old man, who bore it all, however, with patient fortitude. But it was in vain. After some twenty minutes spent in useless efforts to make himself audible, he concluded in mere dumb show, by proposing THE HONOURABLE GEOFFREY LOVEL DELAMERE, at the mention of whose name there again arose a perfect hurricane of howling, hissing, groaning, and hooting. Then Mr Miln thorpe came forward, determined not to be “*put down*.” He was a tall and powerfully built man; bold and determined, with a prodigious power of voice, and the heart of a lion. “Now, lads, I’m ready to try which can tire the other out first! ” he shouted in a truly stentorian voice, heard over all their uproar, which, however, it

redoubled. How vain the attempt ! How ridiculous the challenge ! Confident of his lungs, he smiled good-humouredly at the hissing and bellowing mass before him, and for nearly half an hour persevered in his attempts to make himself heard. At length, however, without his having in the slightest degree succeeded, his pertinacity began to irritate the crowd who, in fact, felt themselves being bullied ; and that no crowd, that ever I saw, or heard of, can bear for one instant ; and what is one "against" so many ? Hundreds of fists were held up and shaken at him. A missile of some sort or another was flung at him, though it missed him ; and then the returning officer advised him to desist from his attempts, lest mischief should ensue ; on which he shouted at the top of his voice, "I second Mr Delamere !" and amidst immense groaning and hissing, replaced his hat on his head, thereby owning himself vanquished ; which the mob also perceiving, they burst into loud and long-continued laughter.

"Now, Mr Titmouse !" said the returning officer, addressing that gentleman : who on hearing the words, turned white as a sheet, and felt disposed to be sick. He pulled out of his coat-pocket a well-worn little roll of paper, on which was the speech which Mr Gammon had prepared for him, as I have already intimated ; and with a shaking hand he unrolled it, casting at its contents a glance—momentary and despairing. What then would that little fool have given for memory, voice, and manner enough to "speak the speech . . . trippingly on the tongue ?" He cast a dismal look over his shoulder at Mr Gammon, and took off his hat—Sir Harkaway clapping him on the back, exclaiming, "Now for't, lad—have at 'em, and away—never fear !" The moment that he stood bareheaded, and prepared to address the writhing mass of faces before him, he was greet-

ed with a prodigious shout, while hats were some of them waved and others flung into the air. It was, indeed, several minutes before the uproar abated in the least. With fearful rapidity, however, every species of noise and interruption ceased—and a deadly silence prevailed. The sea of eager excited faces—all turned towards him—was a spectacle which might for a moment have shaken the nerves of even a man—had he been "unaccustomed to public speaking." The speech, which—brief and simple though it was—he had never been able to make his own, even after copying it out half-a-dozen times, and trying to learn it off for an hour or two daily during the preceding fortnight, he had now utterly forgotten ; and he would have given a hundred pounds to retire at once from the contest, or sink unperceived under the floor of the hustings.

"Begin ! begin ! " whispered Gammon earnestly.

"Ya—a—s—but—what shall I say ?" stammered Titmouse.

"Your speech"—answered Gammon impatiently.

"I—I—'pon my—soul—I've—for-got every word of it !"

"Then *read* it," said Gammon in a furious whisper—"Good Heavens ! you'll be hissed off the hustings !—Read from the paper, do you hear ?" he added, almost gnashing his teeth.

Matters having come to this fearful issue, "Gentlemen," commenced Mr Titmouse faintly—

"Hear him ! Hear, hear !—Hush !—Sh ! sh !" cried the impatient and expectant crowd.

Now I happen to have a short-hand writer's notes of every syllable uttered by Mr Titmouse, together with an account of the reception it met with ; and I shall here give the reader, first, Mr Titmouse's actual, and secondly, Mr Titmouse's reported speech, as it appeared, two days afterwards, in the columns of the *Yorkshire Stingo*.

"Look here upon this picture—and on this!"

Mr Titmouse's ACTUAL Speech.

"GENTLEMEN,—Most uncommon, unaccustomed as I am, (*cheers*)—happy—memorable,—proudest — high honour — unworthy, (*cheering*)—day of my life—important crisis, (*cheers*)—day gone by, and arrived—too late, (*cheering*)—civil and religious liberty all over the world, (*immense cheering, led off by Mr Mudflint.*) Yes, gentlemen—I would observe—it is unnecessary to say—passing of that truly glorious Bill—charter—no mistake—Britons never shall be slaves, (*enthusiastic cheers.*)—Gentlemen, unaccustomed as I am to address an assembly of this—a-hem! (*hear! hear! hear!* and *cheers*)—civil and religious liberty all over the world, (*cheers*)—yet the tongue can feel where the heart cannot express the (*cheers*)—so help me——! universal suffrage and cheap and enlightened equality, (*cries of, 'that's it, lad!'*)—which can never fear to see established in this country—(*cheers*)—if only true to—industrious classes and corn-laws—yes, gentlemen, I say corn-laws—for I am of op—(*hush! cries of 'ay lad, what dost say about THEM?'*) working out the principles which conduce to the establishment a—a—a—civil and religious liberty of the press! (*cheers!*) and the working classes, (*hush!*)—Gentlemen, unaccustomed as I am—well—at any rate—will you—I say—will you? (*vehement cries of 'No! No! Never!'*) unless you are true to yourselves! Gentlemen, without going into—vote by Ballot (*cheers*) and quarterly Parliaments, (*loud cheering,*) three polar stars of my public conduct—(here the great central banner was waved to and fro, amidst enthusiastic cheering)—and reducing the overgrown Church Establishment to a—a—a—difference between me and my honourable opponent, (*loud cheers and groans,*) I live among you, (*cheers*)—spend my money in the borough, (*cheers*)—no business to come here, (*No, no!*)—right about, close borough, (*kisses!*)

Mr Titmouse's REPORTED Speech.

"Silence having been restored, Mr Titmouse said, that he feared it was but too evident that he was unaccustomed to scenes so exciting as the present—that was one source of his embarrassment; but the greatest was, the enthusiastic reception with which he had been honoured, and of which he owned himself quite unworthy, (*cheers.*) He agreed with the gentleman who had proposed him in so able and powerful a speech, (*cheers,*) that we had arrived at a crisis in our national history, (*cheering*)—a point at which it would be ruin to go back, while to stand still was impossible, (*cheers;*) and, therefore, there was nothing for it but to go forward, (*great cheering.*) He looked upon the passing of the Bill for giving Everybody Everything, as establishing an entirely new order of things, (*cheers,*) in which the people had been roused to a sense of their being the only legitimate source of power, (*cheering.*) They had, like Sampson, though weakened by the cruelty and torture of his tyrants, bowed down and broken into pieces the gloomy fabric of aristocracy. The words 'Civil and Religious Liberty' were now no longer a byword and a reproach, (*cheers;*) but, as had been finely observed by the gentleman who had so eloquently proposed him to their notice, the glorious truth had gone forth to the ends of the earth, that no man was under any responsibility for his opinions or his belief, any more than for the shape of his nose, (*universal cheering.*) A spirit of tolerance, amelioration, and renovation, was now abroad, actively engaged in repairing our defective and dilapidated constitution, the relict of a barbarous age—with some traces of modern beauty, but more of ancient ignorance and unsightliness, (*cheers.*) The great Bill he alluded to, had roused the *masses* into political being, (*immense cheering,*) and made them sensible of the necessity of keep-

—patient attention, which I will not further trespass upon, (*hear! hear! and loud cheering,*)—full explanation—rush early to the—base, bloody, and brutal (*cheers*)—poll triumphant—extinguish for ever, (*cheers.*)—Gentlemen, these are my sentiments—wish you many happy—re—hem! a-hem—and by early displaying a determination to—(*cries of 'we will! we will!'*)—eyes of the whole country upon you—crisis of our national representation—patient attention—latest day of my life.—Gentlemen, yours truly.”

ing down a rapacious and domineering oligarchy, (*groans.*) Was not the liberty of the press placed now upon an intelligible and imperishable basis?—Already were its purifying and invigorating influences perceptible, (*cheering*)—and he trusted that it would never cease to direct its powerful energies to the demolition of the many remaining barriers to the improvement of mankind, (*cheers.*) The corn-laws must be repealed, the taxes must be lowered, the army and navy reduced; vote by ballot and universal suffrage conceded, the quarterly meeting of Parliament secured, and the revenues of the church be made applicable to civil purposes. Marriage must be no longer fenced about by religious ceremonials, (*cheers.*) He found that there were three words on his banner, which were worth a thousand speeches—*Peace, Retrenchment, Reform*—which, as had been happily observed by the gentleman who had so ably proposed him”

[And so on for a column more; in the course of which there were really so many flattering allusions to the opening speech of the proposer of Titmouse, that it has often occurred to me as probable, that the “Reverend” Mr Mudflint had supplied the above report of Mr Titmouse’s speech.]

Mr Titmouse, on concluding, made a series of profound bows, and replaced his hat upon his head, amidst prolonged and enthusiastic cheering, which, on Mr Delamere’s essaying to address the crowd, was suddenly converted into a roaring tempest of hissing and howling; like as we now and then find a shower of rain suddenly change into hail. Mr Delamere stood the pitiless pelting of the storm with calmness, resolution, and good-humour. Ten minutes had elapsed, and he had not been allowed to utter a syllable audible to any one beyond four or five feet from him. Every fresh effort he made to speak caused a renewal of the uproar, and many offensive and opprobrious epithets were applied to him. It might have occurred to a curious foreigner—What had Mr Delamere done to deserve such treatment? Had he been guilty of offering some gross indignity and outrage to every person present, individually, could he

have fared worse than he did? Where-as he had conducted his canvass with scrupulous and exemplary honour and integrity—with the utmost courtesy to all parties, whether adverse or favourable. He was surely not deficient in those qualities of head and of heart—of personal appearance, even—which usually secure man favour with his fellows. Who could lay anything to his charge—except that he bad ventured to solicit the suffrages of the electors of Yatton, in competition with Mr Titmouse? If men of a determined character, of princely means, and strong political opinions, have to calculate upon such brutal usage as this, can those who sanction or perpetrate it wonder at bribery, and other undue means being resorted to, in absolute self-defence? Is it meant to deter any one from coming forward that has not a forehead of brass, leathern lungs, and heart of marble? —After upwards of a quarter of an

hour had been thus consumed, without Mr Delamere's having been permitted to utter audibly two consecutive sentences, though he stood up against it patiently and gallantly, the returning officer, who had often appealed to the crowd in vain, earnestly besought Mr Titmouse to use his influence, in order to secure Mr Delamere a moment's hearing.

"Pon my life—I—eh?" quoth Titmouse. "A likely thing! He'd do it for *me*, wouldn't he? Every man for himself—all fair at an election, eh, Gammon?"

"Do it, sir!" whispered Gammon indignantly—"do it, and instantly—or you deserve to be kicked off the hustings!" Titmouse, on this, took off his hat, but with a very bad grace, and addressing the crowd, said—"I—I—suppose you'll hear what he's got to say for himself, gents"—But all was in vain: "Off! off! No!—Go home!—ah!—ah!—a—a—a—h!—St!—St!—Get away home with you, you young boroughmonger!—a—a—h!" came in louder and fiercer tones from the mob. Yet Mr Delamere did not like to give up without another and a desperate effort to catch the ear of the mob; but while he was in the act of raising his right hand, and exclaiming—"Gentlemen, only a word or two—I pledge my honour that I will not keep you three minutes"—some miscreant from the body of the crowd aimed at him a stone, not a large one to be sure, yet flung with considerable force, and hitting him just about the centre of the upper lip, which it cut open. He instantly turned pale, and applied to the wound his white pocket-handkerchief, which was speedily saturated with blood. Still the gallant young fellow stood his ground with firmness, and the smile which he endeavoured to assume, it was enough to have brought tears into one's eyes to witness. The instant that Gammon had seen the stone take effect, he rushed over towards where Mr Delamere stood, amidst his agitated friends, who were dissuading him from persevering in his attempt to address the crowd—

"You are severely hurt, sir!" exclaimed Mr Gammon, with much agitation, taking off his hat with an air of earnest and respectful sympathy. Then he turned with an appearance of excitement towards the mob, who seemed shocked into silence by the incident which had taken place, and were uttering increasing cries of "Shame! shame!"

"Shame?—shame, *shame*, indeed, gentlemen"—he exclaimed vehemently—"Where is that atrocious miscreant? In the name of Mr Titmouse, who is too much agitated to address you himself, I conjure you to secnre the ruffian, and let him be brought to justice! If not, Mr Titmouse protests solemnly that he will withdraw from the election."

"Bravo, Titmouse! bravo! Spoke like a man!" exclaimed several voices. A desperate struggle was soon perceived about the quarter where the man who flung the stone must have been standing; he had been seized, and in a trice severely handled, a couple of men almost throttled him with the tightness of their grasp round his neck—these two being the very men who had encouraged him to perpetrate the outrage!—and, amidst a shower of kicks and blows, he was hauled off, and deposited, half dead, in the cage.

"Three cheers for Delamere!" cried a voice from the crowd; and a vehement shout issued in response to the summons.

"Delamere! Delamere!—Hear him!—Speak out!—Delamere! Delamere!" cried a great number of voices, of people growing more and more excited as they beheld his handkerchief becoming suffused with blood. But he was not in a condition then to respond to their call. He was suffering really not a little pain; and, moreover, his feelings had for a moment—just for a moment—given way, when he adverted to the possibility that Lady De la Zouch might have witnessed the outrage, or received exaggerated accounts of it. Mr St Aubyn, however, stood forward in Mr Delamere's stead—and in a touching and judicious, but brief

address, roused the feelings of the crowd to a high pitch of sympathy for Mr Delamere, who stood beside him, hat in hand—vehemently, and at length successfully, struggling to repress his rising emotions. If only one out of a hundred of those present had had a vote, this stone's throw might have changed the fate of the election! —No other candidate having been proposed, the returning officer proceeded to call for a show of hands; on which a great number were held up in favour of Mr Titmouse; but when Mr Delamere's name was called, it really seemed as if every one present had extended both his hands!—there could be no mistake, no room for doubt. Titmouse turned pale as a sheet; and gazed with an expression of ludicrous consternation at Gammon, who also looked, in common indeed with his whole party, not a little disconcerted. The returning officer, having procured silence, declared that the choice of the electors had fallen upon Mr Delamere; on which a tremendous cheering followed, which lasted for several minutes; and, recollecting the utter nullity of a show of hands as a test or evidence, either way, of the result of the election,* Mr Gammon directed Mudflint formally to demand a poll on behalf of Mr Titmouse; on which the returning officer announced that the poll would take place at eight o'clock the next morning: and thereupon the day's proceedings closed. Mr Delamere, in a few words, returned thanks to the electors for the honour which they had conferred upon him, and entreated them to go early to the poll. He and his friends then left the hustings. His procession quickly formed; his band struck up with extraordinary energy and spirit—“*See the Conquering Hero comes!*” but the rolling of the drums, the clashing of cymbals, the rich deep tones of the bassoons, trombones, and French horns, and clear and lively notes of flute and clarionette, were quite overpowered

by the acclamations of the crowd which attended them to his committee-room. Sir Percival Pickering, throwing open the window, addressed an excited word or two to the dense crowd; and then, having given three lusty cheers, they withdrew. A glass of wine-and-water quickly refreshed the spirits of Mr Delamere, and a surgeon having arrived found it necessary to dress the wound with much care, for the cut was severe; in fact, the upper lip was partially laid open; and he declared it highly imprudent for Mr Delamere to attempt to make his appearance out of doors on the morrow. As for Mr Crafty, on hearing what had taken place, he uttered, as he felt bound to do, a few casual expressions of sympathy; but what passed through his mind, on resuming his seat, before his papers, was—“What a pity that all those fellows had not had votes, and that the poll had not commenced *instanter!*” The truly unexpected issue of the day's proceedings, while it elevated the spirits of all Mr Delamere's friends, produced only one effect upon the imperturbable Mr Crafty; he strongly suspected that the other side would probably be resorting during the night to measures of a desperate and unscrupulous description, in order to counteract the unfavourable impression calculated to be effected by the defeat of Mr Titmouse at the show of hands. As for that gentleman, by the way, he became exceedingly insolent towards Gammon, on reaching the committee-room, and protested, with fury in his face, that it had all been brought about by Mr Gammon's “cursed officious meddling, in Mr Titmouse's name, before the mob, after the stone had been thrown;” on hearing which, “Go on to the Hall, sir, dine, and get drunk if you choose,” said Gammon, bitterly and peremptorily; “I shall remain here all night. Powerful as are your energies, they require relaxation after the fatigues of the day!” and with a *decisive*, but not violent degree of force, Titmouse was urged, in a twinkling, into the outer committee-room.

* “The show of hands,” (says Lord Stowell, in *Anthony v. Seager*, 1 Hag. Cons. Rep. 18), “is only a rude and imperfect declaration of the sentiments of the electors.”

CHAPTER III.

THE FIGHT WAXES HOT; AND AFTER SURPRISING FLUCTUATION, A GLORIOUS VICTORY IS GAINED.

MR GAMMON had, indeed, as much serious work before him, that night, as Mr Crafty, and prepared for secret and decisive action, every whit as calmly and effectively as he. Mr Crafty's arrangements were admirable. During the day he had parcelled out the borough into a number of small departments, each of which he committed to a discreet and resolute friend of Mr Delamere, who was to look after every elector in his division about whom there was any ground for fear, in respect of either apprehended abduction, or treachery. These gentlemen were to be relieved at intervals; and from one to the other of them, perpetually, were the personal agents of Crafty, to go their rounds, in order to see that all was right, and carry intelligence to headquarters. Then others were intrusted with the ticklish and tiresome duty of watching the movements of the enemy in quarters where Crafty had sure information of intended operations during the night. Complete arrangements had been made, also, for bringing up voters to the poll at the exact times, in the numbers, and in the manner, which might on the morrow be determined on by Mr Crafty. Names were noted down of those to whom the bribery oath was to be administered. Prudent as were these precautions, they did not entirely prevent the mischief against which they had been levelled. As the night wore on, evidence was, from time to time, brought in to Mr Crafty, that the enemy were at work at their expected tricks. *E. g.—*

"Jacob Joliffe is missing. Wife

says she knows nothing about him.
Inquire."

"Send at least a couple of men to watch Peter Jiggins, or he'll be out of the way when he's wanted."

"Haste—haste. G. Atkins and Adam Hutton, both safe ten minutes ago, are off; enticed out into a post-chaise—gone towards York.—(Half-past eleven.)"

"Send some one to the Jolly Snobs to watch the treating going on. *Most important.* Mr Titmouse has been there, and drunk a glass of rum with them. Gave a sovereign for it, and refused to take change when offered."

Then more mysterious missives made their appearance from Mr Crafty's own familiars.

"Q. C. S. H. O.—12."—(i. e. "The Quaint Club still holds out.—Twelve o'clock.")

"Q. C. G. W.—½ past 1."—(i. e. "The Quaint Club are *going wrong.*—Half-past one o'clock.")

"S. B.; G. O. + H. ½ to 2."—(i. e. "I have seen Bran Gammon offers ten pounds, in addition to the ten pounds already given.—They hesitate.—A quarter to two o'clock.)

3

"—— & S. B. & M. w. B. O. Q. heard

C.—12—3."—(i. e. "Three of our people have just overheard and seen Bloodsuck and Mudflint, with Bran, offering the Quaint Club twelve pounds.—Three o'clock.")

"Q. C. G. R. w. Y. & C. T. T. Y. M. S. I.—4."—(i. e. "The Quaint Club are getting restive with *you*, and com-

ing to terms with Titmouse. You must stir instantly.—Four o'clock.")

" $\Delta\Delta$. 10 m. 4."—These last mysterious symbols caused Mr Crafty instantly to bestir himself. He changed colour a little, and went into the adjoining room. The meaning of the communication was—'Great danger to both parties.'

In the adjoining room, where two candles were burning down in their sockets, and the fire was nearly out, were some four or five frosty friends of Mr Delamere—gentlemen, who had placed themselves entirely at Mr Crafty's disposal throughout the night. When he entered, they were all nearly asleep, or at least dozing. Beckoning two of them into his own room, he instructed one to go and plant himself openly—nay, as conspicuously as possible—near the door of Mr Titmouse's committee-room, so as not to fail of being recognised, by any one leaving or entering it, as a well-known friend of Mr Delamere's; in fact, Mr Titmouse's friends were by such means to discover that their motions were watched. The other he instructed to act similarly opposite the door of a small house in a narrow court—the residence of Ben Bran, where all the night's negotiations with the Quaint Club had been carried on. Immediately afterwards, Mr Crafty felt it his duty, as between man and man, to warn his opponent of the mortal peril in which he was placed; and, in his anxiety for fair play, found means to convey the following note into the committee-room where Mr Gammon and one or two others were sitting:

"Take care!! You are deceived! betrayed! Q. C. is sold out and out to the *Blues*!! And part of the bargain, that B. B. shall betray you into bribery in the presence of witnesses—not one man of the club safe; this have just learnt from the wife of one of them. From a well-wishing friend, but *obligated* to vote (against his conscience) for the *Blues*.

"P.S.—Lord D. in the town (quite private) with lots of the *needful*, and doing business sharply."

While Mr Gammon and his companions were canvassing this letter, in came two gentlemen to report that they had been watched, in the way I have stated, from Ben Bran's house to Mr Titmouse's committee-room. Though bereat Gammon's colour deserted his cheek, he affected to treat the matter lightly, and laughed at the idea of being deluded by such boy's play. If Lord De la Zouch—said he—had hired Crafty only to play tricks like these, he might as well have saved the trouble and expense. Here a slight bustle was heard at the door; and the ostler made his appearance, saying that a man had just given him a document which he produced to Mr Gammon, who, hastily unfolding the dirty and ill-folded paper, read as follows:—

"To Squire Titmons. you Are All Wrong. the Blues is wide Awake All Night and nos all, Lord Dillysoush about with One hundred Spies; And look Out for traitors in the Camp. A friend or Enemy as you Will, but loving Fair Play."

"Poh!" exclaimed Gammon, flinging it on the table contemptuously.

Now, I may as well mention here, that about nine o'clock in the evening, Mr Parkinson had brought to Crafty sure intelligence that a zealous and influential person, who was entirely in the confidence of the enemy, had come to him a little while before, and candidly disclosed the melancholy position of his—the aforesaid communicant's—financial affairs; and Mr Parkinson happened to be in a condition to verify the truth of the man's statement, that there was a writ out against him for £250; and that, unless he could meet it, he would have to quit the county before daybreak, and his promising prospects in business would be utterly ruined. Mr Parkinson knew these matters professionally; and, in short, Crafty was given to understand, that so disgusted was Mr M'Do'em—the gentleman in question—with Whig principles (his inexorable creditor being a Whig) and practices, such as the bribery, treating, and cor-

ruption at that moment going on, that—his conscience pricked him—and—allem!—the poor penitent was ready to make all the amends in his power by discovering villainy to its intended victims. Crafty, having felt the ground pretty safe underneath him, took upon himself to say, that Mr M'Do'em need be under no further apprehension as to his pecuniary liabilities; but, in the meanwhile, he would certainly wish for a little evidence of the *bona fides* of his present conduct.

"Come," quoth M'Do'em, after receiving a pregnant wink from Mr Crafty—"send some one whom you can rely upon with me *immediately*, to do as I bid him—and let him report to you what he shall actually see."

No sooner said than done. A trusty managing clerk of Mr Parkinson's forthwith accompanied M'Do'em on a secret expedition. * * *

They stood at a window with a broken pane. 'Twas a small ill-furnished kitchen, and in the corner, close to the fire, sat smoking a middle-aged man, wearing a dirty brown paper cap. Opposite to him were two persons, in earnest conversation with him. They were Mr Mudflint and Mr Bloodsuck, junior.

"Come, come, *that's* decidedly unreasonable," quoth the former.

"No, Sir, it *a'n't*. I'm an independent man!—It quite cut me to the heart, I 'sure you, sir, to see Mr Delamere so dreadfully used—my good missus, that's in bed, says to me—says she"—

"But what had Mr Titmouse to do with it, you know?" said Mudflint, taking out of his pocket a bit of crumpled paper, at which the man he addressed gazed listlessly, shook his head, and exclaimed, "No, it *won't do*—He didn't deserve such treatment, poor young gentleman." (Here Bloodsuck and Mudflint whispered—and the latter, with a bad grace, produced a second bit of crumpled paper).

"*That's* something like"—said the man, rather more good-humouredly.

"Is't *sartain* Mr Titmouse had nothing to do with it?"

"To be sure not!—Now, mind, by a quarter past eight—eh?" inquired Mudflint anxiously, and somewhat sullenly.

"I'm a man of my word—no one can say I ever broke it in earnest; and as for a straightforward bit o' business like this, I say, I'm your man—so here's my hand." * * *

"Don't *that* look rather like business?" inquired M'Do'em in a whisper, after they had lightly stepped away.—"But come along!" * * *

After another similar scene, the two returned to the Hare and Hounds, and the matter was satisfactorily settled between Crafty and M'Do'em—one hundred down, and the rest on the morning after the election. He was to *poll for Titmouse*, and that, too, early in the day; and be as conspicuous and active as possible in his exertions in behalf of that gentleman—to appear, in short, one of his most stanch and confidential supporters. Whether Lord De la Zouch or his son would have sanctioned such conduct as this, had they had an inkling of it, I leave to the reader to conjecture: but Crafty was easy about the matter—'twas only, in *his* opinion, "*manceuvring*"; and all weapons are fair—thought he—against a burglar or highwayman; all devices against a swindler. M'Do'em gave Crafty a list of nine voters at Grilston who had received five pounds a-piece; and enabled him to discover a case of wholesale *treating*, brought home to one of the leading members of Mr Titmouse's committee. Well, this worthy capped all his honourable services by hurrying in to Gammon, some quarter of an hour after he had received the second anonymous letter, and with a perfect appearance of consternation, after carefully shutting the door and eyeing the window, faltered that all was going wrong—that traitors were in the camp; that Lord De la Zouch had bought every man of the Quaint Club two days before at thirty pounds a-head! half already paid down, the rest to be paid on the morning of the

fifteenth day after Parliament should have met *—(M'Do'em said he did not know what that meant, but Gammon was more influenced and alarmed by it than by anything else that had happened); that Ben Bran was playing false, having received a large sum—though how much M'Do'em had not yet learned—as head-money from Lord De la Zouch; and that, if one single farthing were after that moment paid or promised to any single member of the club, either by Mr Titmouse, or any one on his behalf, they were all delivered, bound hand and foot, into the power of Lord De la Zouch, and at his mercy. That so daring and yet artful was Lord De la Zouch, that his agents had attempted to tamper with even HIM, M'Do'em! but so as to afford him not the least hold of them. Moreover, he knew a fellow-townsman who would, despite all his promises to the liberal candidate, poll for Delamere; but nothing should induce him, M'Do'em, to disclose the name of that person, on account of the peculiar way in which he, M'Do'em, had come to know the fact. On hearing all this, Gammon calmly made up his mind for the worst; and immediately resolved to close all further negotiation with the Quaint Club. To have acted otherwise would have been mere madness, and courting destruction. The more he reflected on the exorbitant demand of the Quaint Club—so suddenly exorbitant, and enforced by such an impudent sort of quiet pertinacity—the more he saw to corroborate the alarming intelligence of M'Do'em. Mr Gammon concealed much of his emotion; but he ground his teeth together with the effort. Towards six o'clock, there was a room full of the friends and agents of Titmouse; to whom Gammon, despite all that had happened, and which was known to only four or five of those present, gave a highly encouraging account of the day's prospects, but

* I. e., the moment after it was too late to question the election, the prescribed period for petitioning having elapsed. This is now altered.

impressed upon them all, with infinite energy, the necessity for caution and activity. A great effort was to be made to head the poll from the first, in order at once to do away with the *prestige* of the show of hands; “and the friends of Mr Titmouse” (*i. e.* the ten pounds' worth of mob) were to be in attendance round the polling-booth at seven o'clock, and remain there the rest of the day, in order, by their presence, to encourage and protect (!) the voters of Mr Titmouse. This and one or two other matters having been thus arranged, Mr Gammon, who was completely exhausted with his long labour, retired to a bedroom, and directed that he should, without fail, be called in one hour's time. As he threw himself on the bed, with his clothes on, and extinguished his candle, he had at least the consolation of reflecting, that nine of the enemy's stanchest voters were safely stowed away, (as he imagined), and that seven or eight of the *accessibles*, pledged to Mr Delamere, had promised to reconsider the matter.

If Gammon had taken the precaution of packing the front of the polling-booth in the way I have mentioned, Mr Crafty had not overlooked the necessity of securing efficient protection for his voters; and between seven and eight o'clock no fewer than between four and five hundred stout yeomen, tenants of Lord De la Zouch, and others of the surrounding nobility and gentry, made their appearance in the town, and insinuated themselves into the rapidly accumulating crowd; many of them, however, remaining at large, at the command of Mr Delamere's committee, in order, when necessary, to secure safe access to the poll for those who might require such assistance. It was strongly urged upon Mr Crafty to bring up a strong body of voters at the commencement, in order to head the polling at the end of the first hour. “Not the least occasion for it,” said Crafty quietly—“I don't care a straw for it; in a small borough no end can be gained, where the voters are so few in number that every man's vote is secured

long beforehand to a dead certainty. There's no prestige to be gained or supported. No. Bring up first all the distant, and the most uncertain voters—the timid, the feeble, the wavering; secure them early while you have time and opportunity. Again, for the first few hours poll languidly; it may render the enemy over-easy. You may perhaps make a sham rush of about twenty or thirty between twelve and one o'clock, to give them the idea that you are doing your best. Then fall off, poll a man now and then only, and see what they will do, how they are playing off their men. If you can hang back till late in the day, then direct, secretly and cautiously, the bribery oath and the questions to be put to each of the enemy's men as they come up; and, while you are thus picking them off, pour in your own voters before the opposite party is aware of your game, and the hour for closing the poll may perhaps arrive while some dozen or so of their men are unpolled. But above all, gentlemen," said Crafty, "every one to his own work only. One thing, at a time, throughout the day; which is quite long enough for all you have to do. Don't hang back in order to bring up several voters at once; if you have one ready, take him up instanter, and have done with him. Don't give yourselves the least concern about ascertaining the numbers that have polled, but only those that have yet to be polled; the returns I will look after. Let those stand behind the check-clerks, who are best acquainted with the names, persons, and circumstances of the voters who come up, and can detect imposture of any sort before the vote is recorded, and the mischief done. The scoundrel may be thus easily kept off the poll-books, whom it may cost you a thousand pounds hereafter to attempt to remove, in vain."

The day was bright and frosty; and long before eight o'clock the little town was all alive with music, flags, cheering, and crowds passing to and fro. The polling-booth was commodi-

ous and well constructed, with a view to the rapid access and departure of the voters. By eight o'clock there were more than a couple of thousand persons collected before the booth; and—significant evidence of the transient nature of yesterday's excitement! —the yellow colours appeared as five to one. Just before eight o'clock, up drove Mr Titmouse, in a dog-cart, from which he jumped out amidst the cheers of almost all present, and skipped on to the bench behind his own check-clerk, with the intention of remaining there all day to acknowledge the votes given for him! But Mr Delamere, with a just delicacy and pride, avoided making his appearance either at or near the booth, at all events till the voting was over. The first vote given was that of Obadiah Holt, the gigantic landlord of the Hare and Hounds, and for Mr Delamere; the event being announced by a tremendous groan; but no one ventured any personal incivility to the laughing giant that passed through them. A loud cheer, as well as a sudden bobbing of the head on the part of Titmouse, announced that the second vote had been recorded for him; and indeed, during the next twenty minutes he polled fifteen for Delamere's eight. At nine o'clock the poll stood thus—

Titmouse,	:	:	:	31
Delamere,	:	:	:	18
				—

Majority, 13

Steadily adhering to Mr Crafty's system, at ten o'clock the poll stood—

Titmouse,	:	:	:	53
Delamere,	:	:	:	29
				—

Majority, 24

At eleven o'clock—

Titmouse,	:	:	:	89
Delamere,	:	:	:	41
				—

Majority, 48

At twelve o'clock—

Titmouse,	:	:	:	94
Delamere,	:	:	:	60
				—

Majority, 34

At one o'clock—

Titmouse,	:	:	:	129
Delamere,	:	:	:	84
				—

Majority, 45

At this point they remained stationary for some time; but Delamere had polled all his worst votes, Titmouse almost all his best. The latter had, indeed, only seventeen more in reserve, independently of the Quaint Club, and the still neutral twenty accessibles; while Delamere had yet, provided his promises stood firm, and none of his men were huccussed or kidnapped, forty-five good men and true—and some faint hopes, also, of the aforesaid twenty accessibles. For a quarter of an hour, not a man came up for either party; but at length two of Delamere's leading friends came up, with faces full of anxiety, and recorded their votes for Delamere, amidst loud laughter. About half-past one o'clock, a prodigious—and I protest that it was both to Lord De la Zouch and his son a totally unexpected—rush was made on behalf of Delamere, consisting of *the twenty accessibles*; who, in the midst of yelling, and hissing, and violent abuse, voted, one after another, for Delamere. Whether or not a strong pressure had been resorted to by some zealous and powerful gentlemen in the neighbourhood, but entirely independent of Mr Delamere, I know not; but the fact was as I have stated. At two o'clock the poll stood thus—

Titmouse,	:	:	:	:	145
Delamere,	:	:	:	:	134
Majority,					11

Thus Titmouse had then polled within one of his positive reserve, and yet was only eleven above Delamere, who had still fifteen men to come up!

"Where is the Quaint Club?" began to be more and more frequently and earnestly asked among the crowd: but no one could give a satisfactory answer, and more than one conjecture was hazarded, as to the possibility of their coming up under blue colours. But—where were they? Were they watching the state of the poll, and under marching orders the moment when the enemy should be at his extremity? 'Twas indeed a matter of exquisite anxiety! — Between two o'clock and a quarter past, not a

voter was polled on either side; and the crowd, wearied with their long labours of hissing and shouting, looked dispirited, listless, and exhausted. By-and-by Mr Gammon, and Messrs Bloodsuck, (senior and junior), Mudflint, Woodlouse, Centipede, Gimblossom, Going Gone, Hic Hæc Hoc, and others, made their appearance in the booth, around Titmouse; all looking soured, depressed, and fatigued. Their faces were indeed enough to sadden and silence the crowd. Were Mr Titmouse's forces exhansted?—"Where's the Quaint Club?" roared out a man in the crowd, addressing Mr Gammon, who smiled wretchedly, in silence. The reason of his then appearing at the polling booth, was certainly to ascertain the fate of the Quaint Club; but he had also another; for he had received information that within a short time Dr Tatham, and also fourteen of the Yatton tenantry, were coming up to the poll. Mr Gammon, accordingly, had not stood there more than five minutes, before a sudden hissing and groaning announced the approach of a Blue—in fact, it proved to be little Dr Tatham, who had been prevented from earlier coming up, through attendance on one or two sick parishioners, in diffrent parts of the neighbourhood, to whom he had been summoned unexpectedly. It cost the quiet stout-hearted old parson no little effort, and occasioned him a little discomposure, elbowed, and jolted, and insulted as he was; but at length, there he stood before the poll-clerks—who did not require to ask him his name or residence. Gammon gazed at him with folded arms, and a stern and sad countenance. Presently, inclining slightly towards Mudflint, he seemed to whisper in that gentleman's ear; and—"Administer the bribery oath," said the latter to the returning officer, eagerly.

"Sir," exclaimed that functionary in a low tone, with amazement—"the bribery oath—! To Dr Tatham? Are you in earnest?"

"Do your duty, sir!" replied Mudflint, in a bitter insulting tone.

"I regret to inform you, sir, that I

am required to administer the bribery oath to you," said the returning officer to Dr Tatham, bowing very low.

"What? What? The bribery oath? To me?" inquired Dr Tatham, giving a sudden start, and flushing violently: at which stringent evidence of his guilt—

"Aha!" cried those of the crowd nearest to him—"Come, old gentleman! Thou mun bolt it now!"

"Is it pretended to be believed," faltered Dr Tatham, with visible emotion—"that I am bribed?" But at that moment his eye happened to light upon the exulting countenance of "the Reverend" Mr Mudflint; and it calmed him. Removing his hat, he took the Testament into his hand, while the crowd ceased hooting for a moment, in order to hear the oath read; and with dignity he endured the indignity. He then recorded his vote for Mr Delamere; and after fixing a sorrowful and surprised eye on Mr Gammon, who stood with his hat slouched a good deal over his face, and looking in another direction, withdrew; and as he turned his mild and venerable face towards the crowd, the hissing subsided. Shortly afterwards made their appearance amidst great uproar, several of the tenantry of Mr Titmouse to poll for Mr Delamere: all looking as if they had come up, poor souls! rather to receive punishment for a crime, than to exercise their elective franchise in a free country!—Gammon coloured a little; took out his pocket-book and pencil; and fixing on the first of the tenantry, Mark Hackett, the eye, as it were, of a suddenly revived serpent, wrote down his name in silence—but what an expression was on his face! Thus he acted towards every one of those unhappy and doomed persons; replacing his pocket-book whence he had taken it, as soon as the last of the little body had polled. It was now a quarter to three o'clock (the poll closing finally at four), and thus stood the numbers:—

Delamere,	:	:	:	149
Titmouse,	:	:	:	146
Majority,	.			3

On these figures being exhibited by an eager member of Mr Delamere's committee, there arose a tremendous uproar among the crowd, and cries of "Tear it down! Tear it down! Ah! Bribery and corruption! Three groans for Delamere! O—h! o——h! o——h!" Matters seemed, indeed, getting desperate with the crowd; yet they appeared to feel a sort of comfort in gazing at the stern, determined, but chagrined countenance of the riling spirit of the day, Mr Gammon. He was a "deephand,"—thought they—he knew his game; and, depend upon it, he was only waiting till the enemy was clean done, and then would pour in the Quaint Club, and crush them for ever. Thus thought hundreds before the hustings. Not a vote was offered for a quarter of an hour; and the poll-clerks, with their pens behind their ears, employed the interval in munching sandwiches, and drinking sherry out of a black bottle—the onlookers cutting many jokes upon them, while thus pleasantly engaged. Symptoms were soon visible, in the increasing proportion of blue rosettes becoming visible in and about the crowd, that this promising state of things was reviving the hopes of Mr Delamere's party, while it as plainly depressed those in the yellow interest. Not for one moment, during the whole of that close and exciting contest, had Mr Crafty quitted his little inner apartment, where he had planned the battle, and conducted it to its present point of success. Nor had his phlegmatic temperament suffered the least excitement or disturbance; cold as ice though his heart might be, his head was ever clear as crystal. Certainly his strategy had been admirable. Vigilant, circumspect, equal to every emergency, he had brought up his forces in perfect order throughout the day; the enemy had not caught the least inkling of his masterly tactics. By his incessant, ingenious, and *safe* manœuvring, he had kept that dreaded body, the Quaint Club, in play up to this advanced period of the day—in a state of exquisite embarrassment and irresolution, balauing between hopes

and fears ; and he had, moreover, rendered a temporary reverse on the field upon which he then fought, of little real importance, by reason of the measures he had taken to cut off the enemy, entirely, in their very next move. He was now left alone in his little room, standing quietly before the fire with his hands behind him, with real composure, feeling that he had done his duty, and awaiting the issue patiently. The hustings, all this while, exhibited an exciting spectacle. Nearly another quarter of an hour had elapsed, without a single vote being added to the poll. The crowd was great, and evidently sharing no little of the agitation and suspense experienced by those within the booth—(except Mr Titmouse, whose frequent potations of brandy-and-water during the day, had composed him at length to sleep ; and he leaned—absolutely snoring!—against the corner of the booth, out of sight of the crowd). The poll-clerks were laughing and talking unconcernedly together. The leading Blues mustered strongly on their part of the booth ; elated, undoubtedly, but with the feelings of men, who have desperately fought their way, inch by inch, foot to foot, up to a point where they expect, nevertheless, momentarily to be blown into the air. What could have become of the Quaint Club? thought *they* also, with inward astonishment and apprehension. Gammon continued standing, motionless and silent, with folded arms—his dark surtout buttoned carelessly at the top, and his hat slouched over his eyes, as if he sought to conceal their restlessness and agitation. Excitement, intense anxiety, and physical exhaustion, were visible in his countenance. He seemed indisposed to speak, even in answer to any one who addressed him.

"O cursed Quaint Club!" said he to himself—"O cursed Crafty ! I am beaten—beaten hollow—ridiculously ! How the miscreants have bubbled me ! Crafty can now do without them, and won't endanger the election by polling them ! We are ruined ! And what will be said at headquarters, after what

I have led them to believe—bah !" He almost stamped with the vehemence of his emotions. "There's certainly yet a resource ; nay, but that also is too late—a *riot*—a nod, a breath of mine—those fine fellows there—would *down* with hustings, and all the poll-books be destroyed !—No, no ; it is not to be thought of—the time's gone by—besides, the loss of the books would not be fatal !"

It was now nearly a quarter past three o'clock. "It's passing strange!" thought Gammon, as he looked at his watch ; "what can be in the wind ? Not a single man of them been up for either party ! Perhaps, after all, Lord De la Zouch may not have come up to their mark, and may now be merely standing on the chance of *our* being unable to come to terms with them. But what can I do, without certain destruction, after what I have heard ? It will be simply jumping down into the pit."—A thought suddenly struck him ; and with forced calmness he slipped away from the polling-booth, and, with an affectation of indifference, made his way to a house where a trusty emissary awaited his orders. 'Twas a Grilston man, a yellow voter, as much at Gammon's beck and call as Ben Bran was represented to be at the command of Lord De la Zouch. Gammon despatched him on the following enterprise—viz. to rush alarmedly among the club, who knew him, but not his devotion to Gammon—to tell them that he had just discovered, by mere accident, the frightful danger in which they were placed, owing to Mr Gammon's being enraged against them on account of their last proposal—that he had now made up his mind to the loss of the election, and also to commence prosecutions for bribery against every member of the club ; for that, having early suspected foul play, he was in a position "to nail every man of them," without fixing himself, or Mr Titmouse. If he succeeded thus far—viz. in alarming them—then, after apparently dire perplexity, he was suddenly to suggest one mode of at once securing themselves, and foiling their bitter enemy,

Mr Gammon; viz. hastening up to the polling-booth, without a word to any one, and, by placing Titmouse at the top of the poll, destroy Gammon's motive for commencing his vindictive proceedings, and so take him in his own trap. Gammon then returned to the polling-booth, having named the signal by which, while in the booth, he was to be apprised of success, and resumed his former position, without giving to any one near him the slightest intimation of what he had been doing. If he imagined, however, that any movement of his, at so critical a moment, had not been watched, he was grievously mistaken. There were three persons whose sole business it had been, during the whole of that day, to keep a lynx eye upon his every motion, especially as connected with the Quaint Club. But his cunning emissary was equal to the exigency; and having, unseen, reconnoitred the streets for a few moments, he imagined that he detected one, if not two spies, lurking about. He therefore slipped out of a low back window, got down four or five back yards, and so across a small hidden alley, which enabled him to enter, unperceivedly, into the back room of the house he wished.

"Ben! Ben!" he gasped, with an air of consternation.

"Hallo, man! what is't?" quoth Ben, in a hurried whisper.

"Done! every man of you sold! Mr Gammon turned tail on you!—Just happened to overhear him swear a solemn oath to Mr Mudflint, that before four-and-twenty hours" * *

"Lord!—you did!—did you really?"

"So help me ——" exclaimed the man, aghast.

"What's to be done?" quoth Ben, the perspiration bursting out all over his forehead. "We've been made the cursedest fools of by some one!—Hang me if I think the old beast at Fotheringham, or the young cub either, has ever meant"—

"What signifies it? It's all too late now."

"Isn't there any way—eh? To be sure, I own I thought we were pitched a leetle too high with Mr Gam"—

"But he has you now, though; and you'll find he's a devil incarnate!—But stop, I see"—he seemed as if a thought had suddenly glanced across his puzzled and alarmed mind—"I'll tell you how to do him, and save yourselves yet."

"O Lord!—eh?" exclaimed Ben, breathlessly.

"But are your men all together?"

"Oh ay! in five minutes time we could all be on our way to the booth."

"Then don't lose a minute—or all's up for ever!—Don't explain to them the fix they're in till it's all over—and if ever you tell 'em, or any one, the bit o' service I've"—

"Never, Thomas, so help me——!" quoth Ben, grasping his companion's hand, as in a vice.

"Off all of you to the booth, and poll for life and death, for *Titmouse*."

"What? Come—come, Master Thomas!"

"Ay, ay—you fool! Don't you see? Make him win the election, and then, in course, Gammon's no cause to be at you—he'll have got all he wants."

"My eyes!" exclaimed Ben, as he suddenly perceived the stroke of policy. He snapped his fingers, buttoned his coat, popped out of the house—within a few moments he was in the midst of the club, who were all in a back yard, behind a small tavern which they frequented. "Now, lads!" he exclaimed, with a wink of his eye. He took the yellow and the blue colours out of his bosom: returned the blue, and mounted the yellow: so in a trice did every one present, not one single question having been asked at Ben, in whom they had perfect confidence.

To return, however, to Mr Gammon. It was now a minute or two past the half hour—there was scarcely half an hour more before the election must close. The mob were getting sullen. The Quaint Club were being asked for—now with hisses, then with cheers. All eyes were on Gammon, who felt that they were. His face bore witness to the intensity of his emotions; he did not any longer even attempt to disguise his desperate disappointment. His nerves were strung to their high-

est pitch of tension; and his eye glanced incessantly, but half-closed, towards a corner house at a little distance, ah! that eye was suddenly lit up, as it were, with fire—never before had been seen a more rapid change in a man's face. He had at length caught the appointed signal; a man appeared at a window, and seemed, accidentally, to drop a little stick into the street. A mighty sigh escaped from the pent-up bosom of Gammon, and relieved him from a sense of suffocation. His feelings might have been compared to those excited in our great commander, when the Prussians made their appearance at Waterloo. The battle was won; defeat converted into triumph; but suddenly recollecting himself—aware that every muscle of his face was watched—he relapsed into his former gloom. Presently were heard the approaching sounds of music—nearer and nearer came the clash of cymbals, the clangour of trombone and trumpet, the roll of the drum;—all the crowd turned their faces towards the quarter whence the sounds came, and within a few seconds' time was seen turning the corner, full on its way to the booth, the banner of the Quaint Club, with yellow rosettes with streamers on the top of each pole—yellow ribbons on every one's breast. **THE PEOPLE'S CAUSE HAD TRIUMPHED!** Their oppressors were prostrate! A wild and deafening shout of triumph burst from the crowd, as if they had been one man; and continued for several minutes intermingled with the inspiring sounds of the noble air—"Rule Britannia!" played by the two bands, that of Mr Titmouse having instantly joined them.

On marched the club, two and two, and arm-in-arm, with rapid step; their faces flushed with excitement and exultation—their hands vehemently shaken by the shouting crowd, who opened a broad lane for them up to the polling-booth. Oh, the contrast exhibited in the faces of those standing *there!* What gloom, what vexation, what despair, on the one hand—what signs of frantic excitement, joy,

and triumph, on the other! "Titmouse!" cried the first member of the club, as he gave his vote; "Titmouse!" cried the second; "Titmouse!" cried the third; "Titmouse!" cried the fourth. The battle was won. Mr Titmouse was in a majority, which went on increasing every minute, amidst tremendous cheering. Mr Gammon's face and figure would at that moment have afforded a study for a picture; the strongly repressed feeling of triumph yet indicating its swelling influence upon his marked and expressive countenance, where an accurate eye might have detected also the presence of deep anxiety. Again and again were his hands shaken by those near him—Mudflint, Bloodsuck, Woodlouse, Centipede, Going Gone, Gibblossom—as they enthusiastically gave him credit for the transcendent skill he had exhibited, and the glorious result it had secured. As the church clock struck four, the books were closed, and the election was declared at an end, with eighteen of Mr Titmouse's voters yet unpolled! Within a few minutes afterwards, Mr Going Gone hastily chalked upon the board, and held it up exultingly—

Titmouse,	:	:	:	:	:	237
Delamere,	:	:	:	:	:	149
Majority						88!

"Hurrah!—hurrah!—hip, hip, hurrah!" burst from the crowd, while hands were upraised and whirled round, hats flung into the air, and every other mark of popular excitement exhibited. "Titmouse!—Titmouse!—NINE TIMES NINE FOR MR TITMOUSE!" was called for, and responded to with thrilling and overpowering effect. The newly elected member, however, could not be pinched, shaken, or roused, out of the drunken stupor into which, from the combined influence of liquor and excitement, he had sunk. To enable him to go through the responsible duties of the day—viz. bobbing his head every now and then to the worthy and independent electors who came to invest him with the proud character of their representative in the House of Com-

mons—he had brought in his pocket a flask of brandy, which had been thrice replenished : in a word, the popular idol was decidedly not presentable : and under the impulse of strong emotion, Mr Gammon, infinitely to the disgust of the Reverend Smirk Mudflint, who was charged up to his throat with combustible matter, and ready to go off at an instant's notice, stepped forward, and on removing his hat, was received with several distinct and long-continued rounds of applause. Silence having been at length partially restored—

" Yes, gentlemen," he commenced, in an energetic tone, and with an excited and determined air and manner, " well may you utter those shouts of joy, for you have fought a noble fight, and won a glorious victory, (great cheering). Your cause, the cause of freedom and good government, is triumphant over all opposition, (immense cheering). The hideous forms of bigotry and tyranny are at this moment lying crushed and writhing, (vehement cheering rendered the rest of the sentence inaudible). Gentlemen, truth and independence have this day met and overthrown falsehood and slavery, (cheers), in spite of the monstrous weapons with which they came into the field, (groans)—bribery, (groans), corruption, (groans), intimidation, (hisses), coercion and treachery, (mingled groans and hisses). But, gentlemen, thank God, all was in vain ! (enthusiastic cheering). I will not say that a defeated despot is at this moment sitting with sullen scowl in a neighbouring castle, (tremendous shouts of applause); all his schemes frustrated, all his gold scattered in vain, and trampled under foot by the virtuous electors whom he sought first to corrupt, and then degrade into slaves, (great cheering). Gentlemen, let us laugh at his despair, (loud and prolonged laughter) ; but let us rejoice like men, like freemen, that the degraded and execrable faction to which he belongs is defeated, (cheering). Gentlemen, if ever there was a contest in which public spirit and principle triumphed over public and pri-

vate profligacy, this has been it ; and by this time to-morrow, hundreds of constituencies will be told, as their own struggles are approaching, to—look at Yatton—to emulate her prond and noble example ; and England will soon be enabled to throw off the hateful incubus that has so long oppressed her, (immense cheering). But, gentlemen, you are all exhausted, (No ! no ! and vehement cheers) ; Mr Titmouse's friends are *all* exhausted after the great labour and excitement of this glorious day, and need repose, in order that on the morrow we may meet refreshed, to enjoy the full measure of our triumph, (cheering). In particular, your distinguished representative, Mr Titmouse, worn out with the excitement of the day, long depressed by the adverse aspect of the poll, was so overpowered with the sudden and glorious change effected by that band of patriots who— (the rest of the sentence was drowned in cheering). Gentlemen, he is young, and unaccustomed to such extraordinary and exciting seenes, (hear, hear, hear !) but by the morrow he will have recovered sufficiently to present himself before you, and thank you with enthusiasm and gratitude, (cheers). In his name, gentlemen, I do, from my soul, thank you for the honour which you have conferred upon him, and assure you that he considers any past success with which Providence may have blessed him, (hear, hear, hear !) as nothing, when compared with the issue of this day's struggle, (cheering). Rely upon it, that his conduct in Parliament will not disgrace you, (no, no, no !) And now, gentlemen, I must conclude, trusting that with victory will cease animosity, and that there will be an immediate declaration of those feelings of frank and manly cordiality, and good feeling, which ought to distinguish free fellow-citizens, and which, above all, are signally characteristic of Englishmen, (cheering). Shake hands, gentlemen, with a fallen enemy, (we will, we will !) and forget, having conquered, that you had ever fought."

With these words, uttered with the

fervour and eloquence which had indeed distinguished the whole of his brief address, he resumed his hat, amidst re-echoing shouts of "three times three for Mr Titmouse!"—"three times three for Mr Gammon!"—"nine times nine groans for Mr Delamere!"—all of which were given with tumultuous energy. The two bands approached; the procession formed; the nearly insensible Titmouse, his face deadly pale, and his hat awry, was partly supported and partly dragged along between Mr Gammon and Mr Going Gone; and to the inspiring air of "See the Conquering Hero comes," and accompanied by the cheering

crowd, they all marched in procession to Mr Titmouse's committee-room. He was buried up-stairs; then led into a bedroom; and there soon, alas! experienced the overmastering power of sickness; which instantly obliterated all recollection of his triumph, and made him utterly unconscious of the brilliant position to which he had just been elevated—equally to the honour of himself and his constituency, who justly and proudly regarded

"TITTLEBAT TITMOUSE, Esq. M.P."

as the glorious first-fruits to them of the glorious "*Bill for giving Every-body Everything.*"

CHAPTER IV.

SERIOUS INCIDENTS FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF THE VICTORS; WHO HAVE ALSO TO FIGHT ANOTHER BATTLE ON NEW GROUND.

At a late hour on the night of the election, an interview took place between Ben Bran and Mr Gammon, of which all that I shall say at present is, that it was equally confidential and satisfactory. There can be no harm, however, in intimating that Mr Gammon made no allusion to the arrival of the Greek kalends; but he *did* to—the fifteenth day after the meeting of Parliament.* He satisfied Ben—and through him the Quaint Club—that Lord De la Zouch's agents had been only deluding them, and had laid a deep plan for ensnaring them—which Gammon had early seen through, and endeavoured to defeat. A little circumstance which happened some two or three days afterwards, seemed to corroborate the truth of at least a portion of his statements—viz. eight prosecutions for bribery were brought against as many members of the Quaint Club: and on their hastily assembling to

consult upon so startling an incident, one still more so came to light;—five active members were not to be found! Writs in actions for penalties of £500 each, were on the same day served upon—Barnabas Bloodsuck, Smirk Mudflint (otherwise called *the Reverend* Smirk Mudflint), Cephas Woodlouse, and—woe is me that I should have it to record!—"ONLY GAMMON, gentleman, one of the attorneys of our lord the king, before the king himself at Westminster." The amount claimed from him was £4000; from Bloodsuck, £3000; and from Mudflint, £2500, which would, alas! have alone absorbed all the pew-rents of his little establishment for one hundred years to come, if his neat little system of moral teaching should so long live. What was the consternation of these gentlemen to discover, when in their turn they called a private meeting of their leading friends, that one of them also was missing—viz. Judas

* See APPENDIX.

M'Do'em! Moreover, it was palpable that amidst an ominous silence and calmness on the other side—even on the part of the *True Blue*—a guarded, systematic, and persevering search for evidence, was going on; and with all Gammon's self-possession, the sudden sight of Mr Crafty stealthily quitting the house of an humble Yellow voter, a week after the election, occasioned him somewhat sickening sensations. Gammon was not unaccustomed to wade in deep waters; but these were very deep! A great point, however, had been gained. Mr Titmouse was M.P. for Yatton; and Mr Gammon had maintained his credit in high quarters, where he had stood pledged for the result of the election; having been long before assured that every member returned into the new Parliament was worth his weight in gold. Such were the thoughts passing through the acute and powerful mind of Gammon, as he sate late one night, shortly afterwards, alone at Yatton, Mr Titmouse having retired to his bedroom half stupefied with liquor, and anxious to complete matters by smoking himself to sleep. The wind whistled cheerlessly round the angle of the Hall in which was situated the room where he sate, his feet resting on the fender, his arms folded, and his eyes fixed on the fire. Then he took up the newspaper recently arrived from town, which contained a report of his speech to the electors at the close of the poll; it was the organ of the Whig party—the *Morning Growl*; and its leading article commented in encomiastic terms upon his address, "given in another part of the paper." His soul heaved with disgust at the thoughts of his own dissimulation;—"Independence!" "Purity of Election!" "Public Principle!" "Triumph of Principle!" "Popular enthusiasm!" "Man of the people!"—"Look, thought he—eugh—at Titmouse! Is representation an utter farce—a mere imaginary privilege of the people? If not, what but public swindlers are we who procure the return of such idiots as—faugh! Would I had been on the other"— He rose, sighed, lit his

chamber candle, and retired to bed, but not to rest; for he spent several hours in endeavouring to retrace every step which he had taken in the election—with a view to ascertain how far it could be proved that he had legally implicated himself. The position in which, indeed, he and those associated with him in the proceedings, were now placed, was one requiring his most anxious consideration; with a view, not merely to the retention of Mr Titmouse's seat, so hardly won, but to the fearful personal liabilities with which it was sought to fix himself, Gammon. The inquiries which he instituted into the practices alleged to have prevailed upon the other side, led to no satisfactory results. If the enemy had bribed, they had done so with consummate skill and caution. Yet he chose to assume the air of one who thought otherwise; and gave directions for writs for penalties to be forthwith served upon Mr Parkinson, Mr Gold, Mr St Aubyn, and Mr Miln thorpe—all of whom, as indeed he had expected, only laughed at him. But it was woefully different as regarded himself and his friends; for, before Mr Crafty took his departure from Yatton, he had collected a body of evidence, against all of them, of fearful stringency and completeness. In fact, Lord De la Zouch had determined that, if it cost him ten thousand pounds more, he would spare no effort, as well to secure the seat for his son, as to punish those who had been guilty of the atrocious practices which had been revealed to him.

Need I say with what intense interest, with what absorbing anxiety, the progress of this contest had been watched by the Aubreys? From Lady De la Zouch and other friends, but more especially from Dr Tatham, who had regularly forwarded the *True Blue*, and also written frequent and full letters, they had learned, from time to time, all that was going on. Mr Aubrey had prepared them for the adverse issue of the affair; he had never looked for anything else; but could he or any of them feel otherwise than a painful and indig-

nant sympathy with the little Doctor, on reading his account of the gross insult which had been offered to him at the hustings? Kate, before she had read half of it, sprang from her chair, threw down the letter, cried bitterly, then kissed the venerable Doctor's handwriting, and walked to and fro, flashing lightning from her eyes, as her vivid fancy painted to her with painful distinctness that scene of wanton and brutal outrage on one of the most gentle, benevolent, and spotless of God's creatures, whose name was associated in all their minds with everything that was pious, pure, and good—indeed they were all powerfully affected. As for the *Reverend Smirk Mudflint*—"Presumptuous wretch!" quoth Kate, as her flashing eye met that of her brother: and he felt that his feelings, like her own, could not be expressed. The first account she received of the outrage perpetrated on Delamere, was in the columns of the *True Blue*, which, being published on the evening of the nomination, had been instantly forwarded to town by Dr Tatham. It blanched her cheek; she then felt a mist coming over her eyes—a numbness—a faintness ensued; she sank upon the sofa, and swooned. It was a long while, after she had recovered, before a flood of tears relieved her excitement. 'Twas no use disguising matters, even had she felt so disposed, before those who felt so tender a sympathy with her; and who did not restrain their ardent and enthusiastic expressions of admiration at the noble spirit in which Delamere had commenced and carried on his adventure. At whose instance, and to please whom, had it been really undertaken? Kate's heart fluttered intensely at the bare notion of seeing him again in Vivian Street. He would come—she felt—with a sort of *claim* upon her!

And he made his at once desired and dreaded appearance, some days afterwards, quite unexpectedly. Kate was playing on the piano, and had not heard his knock; so that he was actually in the drawing-room before she was aware of his being in Lon-

don, or had formed the slightest expectation of such an event.

"Heavens, Mr Delamere!—Is it you!" she stammered, rising from the piano, her face having suddenly become pale.

"Ay, sweet Kate—unless I am become some one else, as—the rejected of Yatton"—he replied fondly, as he grasped her hands fervently in his own, and led her to the sofa.

"Don't—don't—Mr Delamere"—said she faintly, striving to disengage one of her hands, which she instantly placed before her eyes to conceal her rising emotion. Her brother and Mrs Aubrey considerably came to her relief, by engaging Delamere in conversation. He saw their object; and releasing Miss Aubrey for the present, from his attentions, soon had entered into a long and animated account of all his Yatton doings. In spite of herself, as it were, Kate drew near the table, and, engrossed with interest, listened, and joined in the conversation, as if it had not been actually DELAMERE who was sitting beside her. He made light, as became a man, of the little accident of the wounded lip—but as he went on, Kate looked another way, her eyes obstructed with tears, and her heart yearning towards him. "Oh, Mr Delamere!"—she suddenly and vehemently exclaimed—"what wretches they were to treat you so!" and then blushed scarlet.

"Well—see if I'm not M.P. for Yatton, yet"—said Delamere with a confident air, just before he rose to go—"and that within a few weeks, too, and then"—

"Don't be too sure of that," said Aubrey gravely.

"Sure? I've no more doubt of it," replied Delamere briskly, "than I have of our now being in Vivian Street—if there be the slightest pretence to fairness in a committee of the House of Commons!—Why, upon my honour, we've got no fewer than eleven distinct, unequivocal, well-supported"—

"If election committees are to be

framed of such people as appear to have been returned"—* * *

Did, however, the gaudy flower of Titmouse's victory at Yatton contain the seeds of inevitable defeat at St Stephen's? 'Twas surely a grave question; and had to be decided by a tribunal, the constitution of which, however, the legislature hath since, in its wisdom, seen fit altogether to alter. With matters, therefore, as they then were—but now are not—I deal freely, as with history.

The first glance which John Bull caught of his new House of Commons, under the *Bill for giving Everybody Everything*, almost turned his stomach, strong as it was, inside out; and he stood for some time staring with feelings of alternate disgust and dismay. Really, as far at least as outward appearance and behaviour went, there seemed scarcely fifty gentlemen among them; and those appeared ashamed and afraid of their position. 'Twas, indeed, as though the scum that had risen to the simmering surface of the caldron placed over the fierce fires of revolutionary ardour, had been ladled off and flung upon the floor of the House of Commons. The shock and mortification produced such an effect upon John, that he took for some time to his bed, and required a good deal of severe treatment, before he in any degree recovered himself. It was, indeed, a long while before he got quite right in his head!—As the new House anticipated a good deal of embarrassment from the presidency of the experienced and dignified person who had for many years filled the office of Speaker, they chose a new one; and then, breathing freely, started fair for the session.

Some fifty seats were contested; and one of the earliest duties of the new Speaker, was to announce the receipt of "a petition from certain electors of the borough of Yatton, complaining of an undue election and return; and praying the House to appoint a time for taking the same into its consideration." Mr Titmouse, at that moment, was modestly sitting

immediately behind the Treasury bench, next to a thriving pork-butcher, who had been returned for an Irish county, and with whom Mr Titmouse had been dining at a neighbouring tavern; where he had drunk whisky-and-water enough to elevate him to the point of rising to present several petitions from his constituents—first, from Smirk Mudflint, and others, for opening the universities of Oxford and Cambridge to Dissenters of every denomination, and abolishing the subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles; secondly, from Mr Hic Hæc Hoc, praying for a commission to inquire into the propriety of translating the Eton Latin and Greek grammars into English; thirdly, from several electors, praying the House to pass an act for exempting members of that House from the operation of the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Laws, as well as from arrest on mesne and final process; and lastly, from certain other electors, praying the House to issue a commission to inquire into the cause of the Tick in sheep. I say this was the auspicious commencement of his senatorial career, meditated by Mr Titmouse, when his ear caught the above startling words uttered by the Speaker; which so disconcerted him—prepared though he was for some such move on the part of his enemies, that he resolved to postpone the presentation of the petitions of his enlightened constituents, till the ensuing day. After sitting in a dreadful fright for some twenty minutes or so, he felt it necessary to go out and calm his flurried spirits with a glass of brandy and soda-water. As he was leaving the House a little incident happeued to him, which was attended with memorable consequences.

"A word with you, sir," whispered a commanding voice in his ear, as he felt himself caught hold of by some one sitting at the corner of the Treasury bench—"I'll follow you out—quietly, mind."

The speaker was a Mr SWINDLE O'GIBBET, a tall, elderly, and somewhat corpulent person, with a broad-brimmed hat, a slovenly surtout, and

vulgar swaggering carriage ; a ruddy shining face, that constantly wore a sort of greasy smile ; and an unctuous eye, with a combined expression of cunning, cowardice, and ferocity. He spoke in a rich brogue, with a sort of confidential and cringing familiarity ; yet, withal, 'twas with the air, and tone, of a man conscious of possessing great direct influence out of doors, and indirect influence within doors. 'Twas, in a word, at once insinuating and peremptory—submissive and truculent. Several things had concurred to give Titmouse an exalted notion of Mr O'Gibbet. First, a noble speech of his, in which he showed infinite "pluck" in persevering, against shouts of "order" from all parts of the House, for an hour together ; secondly, his sitting on the front bench, often close beside little LORD BULFINCH, the leader of the House. His lordship was a Whig ; and though, as surely I need hardly say, there are thousands of Whigs every whit as pure and high-minded as their Tory rivals, his lordship was a very bitter Whig. The bloom of original Whiggism, however, ripening fast into the rottenness of Radicalism, gave out at length an odour so offensive to many of his own early friends, that they were forced to withdraw from him. Personally, he was of respectable character ; a man of considerable literary pretensions ; and enjoying that parliamentary influence generally insured to the possessor of talent, tact, experience, and temper. Now, it certainly argued some resolution in Mr O'Gibbet to preserve an air of swaggering assurance and familiarity beside his aristocratic little neighbour, whose freezing demeanour towards him—for his lordship evinced even a sort of shudder of disgnst when addressed by him—Mr O'Gibbet felt to be visible to all around. Misery makes strange bed-fellows, but surely politics stranger still ; and there could not have been a more striking instance of it, than in Lord Bulfinch and Mr O'Gibbet sitting side by side—as great a contrast in their persons as in their characters. But the third and chief ground of Tit-

mouse's admiration of Mr O'Gibbet, was a conversation—private and unheard the parties had imagined it—in the lobby of the House ; but every word whereof had our inquisitive, but not fastidiously scrupulous, little friend contrived to overhear—between Mr O'Gibbet and MR FLUMMERY, a smiling supple Secretary to the Treasury, and whipper-in of the Ministry. Though generally confident enough, on this occasion he trembled, frowned, and looked infinitely distressed. Mr O'Gibbet chuckled him under the chin, familiarly and good-humouredly, and said—" Oh, murther and Irish ! what's easier ?—But it lies in a nut-shell. If you won't do it, I can't swim ; and if I can't swim, you sink—every mother's son of you. Oh, come, come—give me a bit of a push at this pinch."

" That's what you've said so often"—

" Fait, an' what if I have ? And look at the shoves I've given you," said Mr O'Gibbet with sufficient sternness.

" But a—a—really we shall be found out ! The House suspects already that you and we"—

" Bah ! bother ! hubbabe ! Propose you it ; I get up and oppose it—vehemently, do you mind—an' the blackguards opposite will carry it for you, out of love for me, ah, ha !—Aisy, aisy—softly say I ! Isn't that the way to get along ?" and Mr O'Gibbet winked his eye.

Mr Flummery, however, looked unhappy, and remained silent and irresolute.

" Oh, my dear sir—*exporridge frontem!* Get along wid you, you know it's for your own good," said Mr O'Gibbet ; and shoving him on good-humouredly, left the lobby, while Mr Flummery passed on, with a forced smile, to his seat. He continued comparatively silent, and wretched, the whole night.

Two hours before the house broke up, but not till after Lord Bulfinch had withdrawn, Mr Flummery, seizing his opportunity, got up to do the bidding, and eventually fulfilled the prophecy, of Mr O'Gibbet, amidst bitter and incessant jeers and laughter from the Opposition.

"Another such victory and we're undone," said he with a furious whisper, soon afterwards to Mr O'Gibbet.

"Och, go to the ould devil wid ye!" replied Mr O'Gibbet, thrusting his tongue into his cheek, and moving off.

Now, Titmouse had contrived to overhear almost every word of the above curious colloquy, and had naturally formed a prodigious estimate of Mr O'Gibbet, and his influence in the highest quarters.

Within a few minutes' time Mr Titmouse and Mr O'Gibbet might have been seen earnestly conversing together, remote from observation, in one of the passages leading from the lobby. Mr O'Gibbet spoke all the while in a tone which at once solicited and commanded attention. "Sir, of course you know you've not a ghost of a chance of keeping your seat? I've heard all about it. You'll be beat, sir,—dead beat; will never be able to sit in this parliment, sir, for your own borough, and be liable to no end o' penalties for bribery, besides. Oh, my dear sir, how I wish I had been at your elbow! This would never have happened!"

"Oh, sir! 'pon my soul—I—I"—stammered Titmouse, quite thunderstruck at Mr O'Gibbet's words.

"Hush—st—*hush*, wid your chattering tongue, sir, or we'll be overheard, and you'll be ruined," interrupted Mr O'Gibbet, looking suspiciously around.

"I—I—beg your pardon, sir, but I'll give up my seat I'm most uncommon sorry that ever—curse me if I care about being a mem"—

"Oh! and is *that* the way you spake of being a nimirber o' parliment? For shame, for shame, not to feel the glory of your position, sir! There's millions o' gentlemen envying you, just now! —Sir, I see that you're likcly to cut a figure in the House."

"But begging pardon, sir, if it costs such a precious long figure—why, I've come down some four or five thousand pounds already," quoth Titmouse, twisting his hand into his hair.

"An' what if ye have? What's that to a gentleman o' your conse-

quence in the country? It's, moreover, only once and for all; only stick in *now*—and you stay in for seven years, and come in for nothing next general election; and now—d'y'e hear me, sir? for time presses—retire, and give the seat to a Tory if you will—(what's the name o' the blackguard? Oh, it's young Delamere)—and have your own borough stink under your nose all your days! But can you keep a secret like a gentleman? Judging from your appearance, I should say yes!—Sir—is it so?" Titmouse placed his hand over his beating heart, and with a great oath solemnly declared that he would be "mum as death," on which Mr O'Gibbet lowered his tone to a faint whisper—"You'll distinctly understand I've nothing to do with it personally, but it's impossible, sir—d'y'e hear?—to fight the devil except with his own weapons—and there are too many o' the enemies o' the people in the House—a little *money*, sir—eh? Aisy, aisy—softly say I! Isn't that the way to get along?" added Mr O'Gibbet with a rich leer, and poking Titmouse in the ribs.

"'Pon my life that'll do—and—and—what's the figure, sir?"

"Sir, as you're a young mimber, and of liberal principles," continued Mr O'Gibbet dropping his tone still, lower, "*three thousand pounds*"—Titmouse started as if he had been shot.

"Mind, that clears you, sir, d'y'e understand? Everything! Out and out, no reservation at all at all—devil a bit!"

"Three thousand devils!—'Pon my precious soul I shall be ruined between you all!" gasped Titmouse faintly

"Sir, you're not the man I took you for," replied O'Gibbet, impatiently and contemptuously. "Don't you see a barleycorn before your nose? You'll be beat, after spending three times the money I name, and be liable to ten thousand pounds penalties besides for bribery"—

"Oh, 'pon my life, sir, as for that," said Titmouse briskly, but feeling sick at heart, "I've no more to do with it than—my tiger"—

" Bah ! you're a babby, I see !" quoth O'Gibbet testily.

" What's the name o' your man o' business ?—there's not a minute to lose—it's your greatest friend I inane to be, I assure ye—tut, what's his name ?"

" Mr Gammon," replied Titmouse anxiously.

" Let him, sir, be with me at my house in Ruffian Row by nine to-morrow morning to a minute—and alone," said Mr O'Gibbet, with his lip close to Titmouse's ear—" and once more, d'y'e hear, sir?—a breath about this to any one, an' you're a ruined man—you're in my power most completely!"—With this Mr O'Gibbet and Mr Titmouse parted—the former having much other similar business on hand, and the latter determined to hurry off to Mr Gammon forthwith: and in fact he was within the next five minutes in his cab, on his way to Thavies' Inn.

Mr Gammon was at Mr O'Gibbet's, of whom he spoke to Titmouse in earnest and unqualified terms of admiration, at the appointed time: and after an hour's private conference with him, they both went off to Mr Flummery's official residence, in Pillory Place; but what passed there, I never have been able to ascertain, with sufficient accuracy, to warrant me in laying it before the reader.

When the day for taking into consideration the YATTON PETITION had arrived—on a voice calling out at the door of the House, " Counsel in the Yatton petition ! " in walked forthwith eight learned gentlemen, four being of counsel for the petitioner, and four for the sitting member—attended by their respective agents, who stood behind, whilst the counsel took their seats at the bar of a crowded and excited House; for there were several election committees to be balloted for on that day. The door was then locked; and the order of the day was read. Titmouse might have been seen popping up and down about the back ministerial benches, like a parched pea. On the front Treasury bench sat Mr O'Gibbet, his hat slouched over his

fat face, his arms folded. On the table stood several glasses, containing little rolls of paper, each about two or three inches long, and with the name of every member of the House severally inscribed on them. These glasses being placed before the Speaker, the clerk rose, and taking out one or two of the rolls of paper at a time, presented them to the Speaker; who, opening each, read out aloud the name inscribed, to the House. Now, the object was, on such occasions, to draw out the names of thirty-three members then present; which were afterwards to be reduced, by each party alternately striking off eleven names, to ELEVEN—who constituted the committee charged with the trial of the petition. Now the astute reader will see that, imagining the House to be divided into two great classes, viz. those favourable and those opposed to the petitioner—according to whose success or failure a vote was retained, lost, or gained to the *party*—and as the number of thirty-three cannot be more nearly divided than into seventeen and sixteen, 'tis said by those experienced in such matters, that in cases where it ran so close—that side invariably and necessarily won who drew the seventeenth name; seeing that each party having eleven names of those in his opponent's interest, to expunge out of the thirty-three, he who luckily drew this prize of the SEVENTEENTH MAN, was sure to have SIX good men and true on the committee against the other's FIVE. And thus of course it was, in the case of a greater or less proportion of favourable or adverse persons answering to their names. So keenly was all this felt and appreciated by the whole House on these interesting—these solemn, these deliberative, and JUNICIAL occasions—that on every name being called, there were sounds heard, and symptoms witnessed, indicative of eager delight, or intense vexation. Now, on the present occasion, it would at first have appeared as if some unfair advantage had been secured by the opposition; since five of their names were called, to two of those of their

opponents ; but then only one of the five answered, it so happening that the other four were absent, disqualified as being petitioned against, or exempt, while both of the two answered !—You should have seen the chagrined faces, and heard the loud acclamations of “Ts!—ts!—ts!” on either side of the House, when their own men’s names were thus abortively called over!—the delight visible on the other side!—The issue long hung in suspense; and at length the scales were evenly poised, and the House was in a state of exquisite anxiety; for the next eligible name answered to, would really determine which side was to gain or lose a seat.

“Sir Ezekiel Tuddington”—cried the Speaker, amidst profound and agitated silence. He was one of the opposition—but answered not; he was absent. “Ts! ts! ts!” cried the opposition.

“Gabriel Grubb”—This was a ministerial man, who rose and said he was serving on another committee. “Ts! ts! ts!” cried the ministerial side.

“Bennet Barleycorn”—(opposition)—petitioned against. “Ts! ts! ts!” vehemently cried the opposition.

“Phelim O’Doonle” —

“Here!” exclaimed that honourable member, spreading triumph over the ministerial, and dismay over the opposition side of the House; and the thirty-three names having been thus called and answered to, a loud buzz arose on all sides—of congratulation or despondency.

The fate of the petition, it was said, was already as good as decided.—The parties having retired to “strike”* the committee, returned in about an hour’s time, and the following members were then sworn in, and ordered to meet the next morning at eleven o’clock :—

Ministerial.

- (1.) Sir Simper Silly.
- (2.) Noah No-land.
- (3.) Phelim O’Doodle.
- (4.) Micah M’Squash.
- (5.) Sir Caleb Calf.
- (6.) Och Hubbaboo.

* See APPENDIX.

Opposition.

- (1.) Castleton Plume.
- (2.) Charles D’Eresby.
- (3.) Merton Mortimer.
- (4.) Sir Simon Alkmund, Bart.
- (5.) Lord Frederick Brackenbury.

And the six, of course, on their meeting, chose the *chairman*, who was a sure card—to wit, SIR CALEB CALF, Bart.†

Mr Delamere’s counsel and agents, together with Mr Delamere himself, met at consultation that evening, all with the depressed air of men who are proceeding with any undertaking *contra spem*. “Well, what think you of our committee?” inquired, with a significant smile, Mr Berrington, the eloquent, acute, and experienced leading counsel. All present shrugged their shoulders, but at length agreed that even with such a committee, their case was an overpowering one; that no committee could dare to shut their eyes to such an array of facts as were here collected; the clearest case of AGENCY made out—Mr Berrington declared—that he had ever known in all his practice; and eleven distinct cases of BRIBERY, supported each by at least three unexceptionable witnesses; together with half-a-dozen cases of TREATING; in fact, the whole affair, it was admitted, had been admirably got up, under the management of Mr Crafty, who was present, and they must succeed.

“Of course, they’ll call for proof of AGENCY † first,” quoth Mr Berrington, carelessly glancing over his enormous brief; “and we’ll at once fix this—what’s his name—the Unitarian parson, Muff—Muffin—eh?”

“Mudflint—Smirk Mudflint”—

“Aha!—Well!—we’ll begin with him, and—then trot out Bloodsuck and Centipede. Fix them—the rest all follow, and they’ll strike, in spite of their committee—or—egad—we’ll have a shot at the sitting member himself.”

By eleven o’clock the next morning the committee and the parties were in attendance—the room quite crowded—such an array of Yatton

† See APPENDIX.

‡ Ibid.

faces!—There, near the chairman, with his hat perched as usual on his bushy hair, and dressed in his ordinarily extravagant and absurd style—his glass screwed into his eye, his hands stuck into his hinder coat-pockets, and resting on his hips, stood Mr Titmouse; and after the usual preliminaries had been gone through, up rose Mr Berrington with the confident air of a man going to open a winning case—and an overwhelming one he did open—the chairman glancing gloomily at the five ministerials on his right, and then inquisitively at the five opposition members on his left. The statement of Mr Berrington was luminous and powerful. As he went on, he disclosed almost as minute and accurate a knowledge of the movements of the Yellows at Yatton, as Mr Gammon himself could have supplied him with. That gentleman shared in the dismay felt around him. 'Twas clear that there had been infernal treachery; that they were all ruined. "By Jove! there's no standing up against this—in spite of our committee—unless we break them down at the agency—for Berrington don't overstate his cases," whispered Mr Granville, the leading counsel for the sitting member, to one of his juniors, and to Gammon; who sighed, and said nothing. With all his experience in the general business of his profession, he knew, when he said this, little or nothing of what might be expected from a favourable election committee. Stronger and stronger, blacker and blacker, closer and closer, came out the petitioner's case. The five opposition members paid profound attention to Mr Berrington, and took notes; while, as for the ministerials, one was engaged with his betting-book, another writing out franks, in which he dealt, a third conning over an attorney's letter, and two were quietly playing together at "*Tit-tat-to*." As was expected, the committee called peremptorily for proof of AGENCY; and I will say only, that if Smirk Mudflint, Barnabas Bloodsuck, and Seth Centipede, were not fixed as the "AGENTS" of the sitting member—then there is no such relation as that

of principal and agent *in rerum naturâ*; there never was in this world an agent who had a principal, or a principal who had an agent.—Take only, for instance, the case of Mudflint. He was proved to have been from first to last an active member of Mr Titmouse's committee; attending daily, hourly, and on hundreds of occasions, in the presence of Mr Titmouse—canvassing with him—consulting him—making appointments with him for calling on voters, which appointments he invariably kept; letters in his handwriting relating to the election, signed some by Mr Titmouse, some by Mr Gammon; circulars similarly signed, and distributed by Mudflint, and the addresses in his handwriting; several election bills paid by him on account of Mr Titmouse; directions given by him and observed, as to the bringing up voters to the poll; publicans' bills paid at the committee-room, in the presence of Mr Titmouse—and, in short, many other such acts as these were established against all three of the above persons. Such a dreadful effect did all this have upon Mr Bloodsuck and Mr Centipede, that they were obliged to go out, in order to get a little gin-and-water; for they were indeed in a sort of death-sweat. As for Mudflint, he seemed to get sallower and sallower every minute; and felt almost disposed to utter an inward prayer, had he thought it of the slightest use. Mr Berrington's witnesses were fiercely cross-examined, but no material impression was produced upon them; and when Mr Granville, on behalf of the sitting member, confident and voluble, rose to prove to the committee that his learned friend's case was one of the most trumpery that had ever come before a committee—a mere bottle of smoke;—that the three gentlemen in question had been no more the agents of the sitting member than was he, the counsel then on his legs, the agent of the Speaker of the House of Commons, and that every one of the petitioner's witnesses was unworthy of belief—in fact *perjured*—how suddenly awake to the importance of the investigation became the ministerialist

members ! They never removed their eyes from Mr Granville, except to take notes of his pointed, cogent, unanswerable observations ! He called no witnesses. At length he sat down; and strangers were ordered to withdraw—and 'twas well they did : for such an amazing uproar ensued among the committee, as soon as the five opposition members discovered, to their astonishment and disgust, that there was the least doubt amongst their opponents as to the establishment of agency, as would not, possibly, have tended to raise that committee, as a judicial body, in public estimation. After an hour and a half's absence, strangers were re-admitted. Great was the rush—for the fate of the petition hung on the decision to be immediately pronounced. As soon as the counsel had taken their seats, and the eager, excited crowd had been subdued into something like silence, the chairman, Sir Caleb Calf, with a flushed face, and an uneasy expression, read from a sheet of foolscap paper, which he held in his hand, as follows :—

" Resolved—That the Petitioner's Counsel be directed to proceed with evidence of *AOENCY*, " [i. e. the committee were of opinion that no sufficient evidence had yet been given, to establish Messrs Mudflint, Bloodsuck, and Centipede, as the agents of Mr Titmouse, in the election for Yatton !] The five opposition members sat with stern indignant faces, all with their backs turned towards the chairman ; and nothing but a high tone of feeling, and chivalrous sense of their position, as members of a public committee of the House of Commons, prevented their repeating in public their fierce protest against the monstrous decision at which the committee, through the casting voice of the redoubtable chairman, had arrived.

Their decision was not immediately understood or appreciated by the majority of those present. After a pause of some moments, and amidst profound silence—

" Have I rightly understood the resolution of the committee, sir," inquired Mr Berrington with an amazed

air, "that the evidence already adduced is not sufficient to satisfy them as to the agency of Messrs Mudflint, Bloodsuck, and Centipede ?"

" The committee meant, sir, to express as much," replied the chairman dryly, and he sealed a letter with affected indifference : affected indeed ! the letter being one addressed to a friend, to desire him forthwith to take a hostile message on his—the chairman's—behalf to Colonel D'Eresby, one of the committee, who had, during the discussion with closed doors, spoken his mind pretty freely concerning the conduct of the aforesaid chairman !

" Good heavens !" exclaimed Mr Berrington, on receiving the chairman's answer to his inquiry, in a tone of voice loud enough to be heard all over the room, "*neither would they believe though one rose from the dead.*"

" We'd better strike," said his juniors.

" I think so, too," said Mr Berrington ; adding, as he turned towards the committee with an air of undisguised disgust, " I protest, sir, that never in the whole course of my experience have I been so astounded as I am at the decision which has just been announced. Probably, under these circumstances, the committee will be pleased to adjourn till the morning, to give us an opportunity of considering the course we shall pursue." This produced a great sensation.

" Certainly, let it be so," replied the chairman blandly, yet anxiously ; and the committee broke up. Before they met again, three shots a-piece had been exchanged between him and Colonel D'Eresby—"happily without effect," and the parties left the ground in as hostile a spirit as they had reached it. I will say for the Colonel, that he was a plain, straightforward soldier, who did not understand nonsense, nor could tolerate coquetting with an oath.

" Of course the petition is dropped ?" said Mr Berrington bitterly, as soon as all were assembled in the evening, in consultation at his chambers.

" Of course," was the answer, in a sufficiently melancholy tone.

"So help me Heaven!" said Mr Berrington, "I feel disposed to say I will never appear again before a committee. This sort of thing cannot go on much longer! To think that every man of that committee is sworn before God a true judgment to give according to the evidence! I'll take care to strike every one of those six men off from any future list that *I* may have to do with!"

"I can say only," remarked the second counsel, a calm and experienced lawyer, "that, in my opinion, had all of us sat down to frame, beforehand, a perfect case of agency—with facts at will—we could never have framed one stronger than the one to-day declared insufficient."

"I have been in seven other petitions," said Mr Berrington, "this very week; but there the sitting members were Tories: Gracious Heaven! what facts have been *there* held sufficient proof of agency!—The *Barnard Castle* committee yesterday held that, to have been seen once shaking hands in a pastrycook's shop with the sitting member, was sufficient evidence of *agency*—and we've lost the seat! In the *Cucumber Committee*, a man who by chance stood once under a doorway with the sitting member, in a sudden shower of rain—was held thereby to have become his agent; and we *there* also lost the seat!—Faugh! what would foreigners say if they heard such things?"

"It's perhaps hardly worth mentioning," said Mr Parkinson; "but this afternoon I happened to see Mr O'Gibbet dining with Mr O'Doodle, Mr Hubhaboo, and Mr M'Squash, off pork and greens, at the Jolly Thieves' Tavern, in Dodge Street—I—I—they were talking together very eagerly"—

"The less we say about *that* the better," replied Mr Berrington; "I have not had my eyes shut, I can tell you! It's a hard case, Mr Crafty; but after all your pains, and the dreadful expense incurred, it's nevertheless quite farcical to think of going on with a committee like this"—

"Of course the petition is abandoned," replied Crafty.

The next morning they again appeared before the committee.

"I have to inform the committee," commenced Mr Berrington with sufficient sternness, "that my learned friends and I, who had, in our ignorance and inexperience, imagined, till yesterday, that the evidence we then opened was ten times more than sufficient to establish agency before any legal tribunal!"—

"Counsel will be pleased to moderate their excitement, and to treat the committee with due respect," interrupted the chairman warmly, and reddening as he spoke; while the ministerial members looked fiercely at Mr Berrington, and one or two placed their arms a-kimbo.

"—have come to the determination to withdraw the petitioner's case from before the committee; as, under existing circumstances, it would be utterly absurd to attempt"—

"Fait, sir, an' you're mighty indacent—ye are—an' you'd better keep a civil tongue in your head," said Mr O'Doodle fiercely, and with an insolent look at Mr Berrington.

"Sir," said the latter, addressing Mr O'Doodle with a bitter smile—"as it is possible to stand where I do without ceasing to be a gentleman, so it is possible to sit *there*—without becoming one."

"Sir—Misther Chairman—I'll only just ask you, sir—isn't that a brache of privilege?"—

"Oh, be aisy—aisy wid ye—and isn't he hired to say all this?" whispered Mr Hubhaboo; and the indignant senator sat down.

"The petition is withdrawn, sir," said Mr Berrington calmly.

"Then," subjoined his opponent, as quietly rising as his learned friend had sat down, "I respectfully apply to the committee to vote it Frivolous and vexatious."

"Possibly the committee will pause before going *that* length," said Mr Berrington gravely; but he was mistaken. Strangers were ordered to withdraw; and, on their re-admission, the chairman read the resolution of the committee, that "Tittlebat Tit-

mouse, Esq., had been and was duly elected to serve for the borough of Yatton ; and that the petition against his return was *FRIVOLOUS* and *VEXATIOUS* :” by which decision, all the costs and expenses incurred by Mr Titmouse were thrown upon his opponent, Mr Delamere—a just penalty for his wanton and presumptuous attempt. This decision was welcomed by the crowd in the committee-room with clapping of hands, stamping of feet, and cheering.—Such was the fate of the YATTON PETITION. Mr Titmouse, on entering the House that evening, was received with loud cheers from the ministerial benches : and within a few minutes afterwards, Lord Frederick Brackenbury, to give the House

and the public an idea of the important service performed by the committee, rose and moved that the evidence should be printed—which was ordered.

The next day a distinguished patriot gathered some of the blooming fruit of the *Bill for giving Everybody Everything*—not for himself personally, however, but as a trustee for the public ; so, at least, I should infer from the following fact, that whereas, in the morning, his balance at his banker’s was exactly £3, 10, 7½.—by the afternoon, it was suddenly augmented to £3003, 10s. 7½d.—shortly expressed thus :—

$$\text{£3 : 10 : } 7\frac{1}{2} + \text{£3000} = \text{£3003 : 10 : } 7\frac{1}{2}.$$

Thus might our friend Titmouse exclaim, “Out of this nettle danger I’ve plucked the flower safety !”

CHAPTER V.

MR TITMOUSE ACQUIRES SUDDEN DISTINCTION IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

“TWAS, indeed, fortunate for the country, that such, and so early, had been the termination of the contest for the representation of Yatton ; for it enabled Mr Titmouse at once to enter, with all the energy belonging to his character, upon the discharge of his legislative functions. The next day after his own seat had been secured to him by the decision of the committee, he was balloted for, and chosen one of the members of a committee of which Swindle O’Gibbet, Esquire, was chairman, for trying the validity of the return of two Tory impostors for an Irish county. So marvellously quick an insight into the merits of the case did he and his brethren in the committee obtain, that they intimated, on the conclusion of the petitioner’s counsel’s opening address, that it would be quite superfluous for him to call witnesses in support of a statement of facts, which it was presumed the sit-

ting members could not think of seriously contesting. Against this, the sitting members’ counsel remonstrated with indignant energy, on which the committee thought it best to let him take his own course, which would extail its own consequences — viz. that the opposition to the petition would be voted frivolous and vexatious. A vast deal of evidence was then adduced, after which, as might have been expected, the committee reported to the House, that Lord Beverly de Wynston (who owned half the county for which he had presumed to stand) and Sir Harry Eddington (who owned pretty near the other half), both being resident in the county, had been unduly returned ; that two respectable gentlemen, Mr O’Shirtless and Mr O’Toddy—the one a discarded attorney’s clerk, and the other an insolvent publican, neither of whom had ever been in the county till the time of the election—

ought to have been returned ; and the clerk of the House was ordered to amend the return accordingly ; and that the opposition to the petition had been frivolous and vexatious : which last was an ingenious and happy device for making the Peer and Baronet pay the expense of Messrs O'Shirtless and O'Toddy's election ! Mr Titmouse after this formed an intimate acquaintance with the two gentlemen, whom, infinitely to their own astonishment, he had helped to seat for the county, and who had many qualities kindred to his own, principally in the matter of dress and drink.

Shortly afterwards he was elected one of a committee to inquire into the operation of the Usury Laws, and another, of a still more important character—viz. to inquire into the state of our relations with foreign powers, with reference to free trade and the permanent preservation of peace. They continued sitting for a month, and the latter thus stated the luminous result of their inquiry and deliberation, in their report to the House :—“ That the only effectual mode of securing permanently the goodwill of foreign powers, was by removing all restrictions upon their imports into this country, and imposing prohibitory duties upon our exports into theirs ; at the same time reducing our naval and military establishments to a point which should never thereafter occasion uneasiness to any foreign power. And that any loss of revenue occasioned by the adoption of the former suggestion, would be compensated for by the saving of expenditure effected by carrying into effect the latter.” He also served on one or two private committees, which were attended by counsel. In the course of their inquiries many difficult and complicated questions arose, which called forth great ability on the part of counsel. On one occasion, in particular, I recollect that MR DEPTH, one of the most dexterous and subtle reasoners to be found at the English bar, having started the great question really at issue between the parties, addressed a long and masterly argument to the

committee. He found himself, after some time, making rapid way with them ; and, in particular, there were indications that he had at length powerfully arrested the attention of Mr Titmouse, who, with his chin resting on his open hand, and his elbow on the table, leaned forward towards Mr Depth, on whom he fixed his eye apparently with deep attention. How mistaken, however, was Depth ! Titmouse was thinking all the while of two very different matters—viz. whether he could possibly sit it out without a bottle of soda-water, labouring as he was, under the sickening effects of excessive potations overnight ; and also whether his favourite little terrier, Titty, would win or lose, in her encounter on the morrow with fifty rats—that being the number which Mr Titmouse had betted three to one she would kill in five minutes' time. The decision to which that committee might come, would effect interests to the amount of nearly a million sterling, and might or might not occasion a monstrous invasion of vested rights !

He still continued to occupy his splendid apartments at the Albany. You might generally have seen him, about ten o'clock in the morning,—or say twelve, when his attendance was not required upon committees,—reclining on his sofa, enveloped in a yellow figured satin dressing-gown, smoking an enormous hookah, before a little table with a decanter of gin, cold water, and a tumbler or two upon it. On a large round table near him lay a great number of dinner and evening cards, notes, letters, the votes and parliamentary reports. Beside him, on the sofa, lay the last number of the *Sunday Flash*—to which, and the *Newgate Calendar*, his reading was, in fact, almost entirely confined. Over his mantelpiece was a large hideous oil-painting of two brawny and half-naked ruffians in boxing attitude ; opposite was a large picture (for which he had given seventy guineas) of Lord Scaramouch's dog Nestor, in his famous encounter with two hundred rats, which he killed in the astonishingly

short space of seven minutes and fifteen seconds. Opposite to the door, however, was the great point of attraction—viz. a full-length portrait of Titmouse himself. His neck was bare, his ample shirt-collar being thrown down over his shoulders, and his face looking upwards. The artist had laboured hard to give it that fine indignant expression with which, in pictures of men of genius, they are generally represented as looking up towards the moon; but nature had been too strong for him—his eye too accurate, and his brush too obedient to his eye; so that the only expression he could bring out, was one of sensuality and stupid wonder. A rich green mantle enveloped the young senator's figure; and amidst its picturesque folds, was visible his left hand, holding them together, and with a glittering ring on the first and last fingers. In one corner of the room, on a table, were a pair of foils; and on the ground three or four pairs of boxing-gloves. In another part of the room lay a guitar, and a violin, on both of which delightful instruments he was taking almost daily lessons. Though the room was elegantly and expensively furnished, according to the taste of its former occupant, it was now redolent, as were Mr Titmouse's clothes, of the odours of tobacco-smoke, and gin-and-water. Here it was that Mr Titmouse would often spend hour after hour, sparring with Billy Bully, the celebrated prize-fighter and pickpocket; or, when somewhat far gone in liquor, playing cribbage, or put, with his valet—an artful, impudent fellow, who had gained great influence over him.

As for the House—Modesty, the twin-sister of Merit, kept Mr Titmouse for a long time quiet there. He saw the necessity of attentively watching everything passing around him, in order to become practically familiar with the routine of business, before he ventured to step forward into action, and distinguish himself. He had not been long, however, thus prudently occupied, when an occasion presented itself, of which he availed himself with all the bold felicitous

promptitude of genius—whose prime distinguishing characteristic is the successful seizure of opportunity. He suddenly saw that he should be able to bring into play an early accomplishment of his—one of which, when acquiring it, how little he dreamed of the signal uses to which it might be afterwards turned! The great Coke hath somewhere said to the legal student, that there is no kind or degree of knowledge whatsoever, so apparently vain and useless that it shall not, if remembered, at one time or other serve his purpose. Thus it seemed about to be with Mr Titmouse, to whom it chanced in this wise.

In early life, while following the humble calling in which he was occupied when first presented to the reader, he used to amuse himself, in his long journeys about the streets, with bundle and yard-measure under his arm, by imitating the cries of cats, the crowing of cocks, the squeaking of pigs, the braying of donkeys, and the yelping of curs; in which matters he became at length so great a proficient, as to attract the admiring attention of passers-by, and to afford great entertainment to the circles in which he visited. There is probably no man living, though ever so great a fool, who cannot do something or other well; and Titmouse became a surprising proficient in the arts I have alluded to. He could imitate a blue-bottle fly buzzing about the window, and, lighting upon it, abruptly cease its little noise, and anon flying off again, as suddenly resume it;—a chicken, peering and picking its way cautiously among the growing cabbages;—a cat, at midnight on the moonlit tiles, pouring forth the sorrows of her heart on account of the absence of her inconstant mate;—a cock, suddenly waking out of some horrid dream—it might be the nightmare—and in the ecstasy of its fright, crowing as though it would split at once its throat and heart, alarming all mankind;—a little cur, yelping with mingled fear and rage, at the same time, as it were, advancing backwards, in view of a fiendish tom-cat, with high-curved back, flaming

eyes, and spitting fury. I only wish you had heard Mr Titmouse on these occasions ; it might, perhaps, even have reminded you of the observation of Doctor Johnson, that genius is,—great natural powers accidentally directed.

Now there was, on a certain night, about three months after Titmouse had been in the House, a kind of pitched battle between the ministry, and their formidable opponents ; in which the speakers on each side did their best to prove, and in the opinion of many, successfully, that their antagonists were apostates ; utterly worthless ; destitute alike of public and private virtue ; unfit to govern ; and unworthy of the confidence of the country : which aforesaid country was indeed in happy plight in possessing a parliament unanimous in one thing at least—viz. its own worthlessness. My Lord Bulfinch rose late on the third evening of the debate—never had been seen so full a House during the session—and in a long and able speech contended, first, that the opposite side were selfish, ignorant, and dishonest ; and secondly, that ministers had only imitated their example. He was vehemently cheered from time to time, and sat down amidst a tempest of applause. Up then rose Mr Vivid, the ex-minister, and leader of the opposition, and in a few moments there was scarce a sound to be heard except that of the delicious voice, at once clear, harmonious, distinct in utterance, and varied in intonation, of incomparably the finest parliamentary orator of the day. The hearts of those around him, who centred all their hopes in him, beat with anxious pride. He had a noble cast of countenance : a brilliant eye, strongly marked and most expressive features, a commanding figure, and a graceful and winning address. His language, accurate, refined, copious, and vigorous, every word he uttered, *told*. His illustrations were as rich and apt as his reasonings were close and cogent ; and his powers of ridicule unrivalled. On the present occasion he was thoroughly roused, and put forth all his powers. He and Lord Bulfinch had

been waiting for each other during the whole debate ; but Mr Vivid had at length secured the reply, and truly regarded himself as the mouthpiece of a great and grievously-slandered party in the state, whom he had risen to vindicate from the elaborate and envenomed aspersions of Lord Bulfinch ; who sat, speedily pierced through and through with the arrows of poignant sarcasm, amidst the loud laughter of even his own side, so irresistible was the humour of the speaker. Even Mr O'Gibbet, who had been from time to time exclaiming, half aloud to those around—“Och, the pitiful fellow ! The stupid baste !—Nivir mind him—Divil a word, my lord !”—was at length subdued into silence. In fact, the whole House was rushing along with the rapid, brilliant, and impassioned speaker. Every now and then, vehement and tumultuous cheering would burst forth from the opposition, as from one man, answered by as vehement and determined cheering from the ministerial benches ; but you could not fail to observe an anxious and alarmed expression stealing over the faces of Lord Bulfinch's supporters. His lordship sat immovably, with his arms folded, and eyes fixed on his opponent, and a bitter smile on his face, glancing frequently, however, with increasing anxiety towards MR O'SQUEAL, the only “great gun” he had left—that gentleman having undertaken (*infelix puer, atque impor congressus Achilli!*) to reply to Mr Vivid. Poor Mr O'Squeal himself looked pale and dispirited, and would probably have given up all his little prospects, to be able to sneak away from the post he had so eagerly occupied, and devolve upon others the responsibility of replying to a speech looming more and more dreadfully upon his trembling faculties every moment, as infinitely more formidable in all points of view than anything he had anticipated. The speech—he thought—must electrify the public, even as it was then electrifying the House. He held a sheet of paper in one hand resting on his knee, and a pen in the other, with which he incessantly took

notes—only to disguise his fright; for his mind went not with his pen: all he heard was above and beyond him; he might as well have thought of whistling down a whirlwind; yet there was no escape for him. Was the uneasy eye of Lord Bulfinch, more and more frequently directed towards him, calculated to calm or encourage him? or a sight of the adroit, sarcastic, and brilliant debater sitting opposite, who had his eye on Mr O'Squeal, and was evidently to rise and reply to him? Mr O'Squeal began to feel cold as death, and at length burst into a chilly perspiration. After a two hours' speech, of uncommon power and brilliancy, Mr Vivid wound up with a rapid and striking recapitulation of the leading points of his policy when in power, which, he contended, were in triumphant contrast with those of his successors, which he denounced as wavering, inconsistent, perilous to every national interest, and in despicable subservience to the vilest and lowest impulses. "And now, sir," said Mr Vivid, turning to the Speaker, and then directing a bold and indignant glance of defiance at Lord Bulfinch—"does the noble lord opposite talk of *impeachment!* I ask him in the face of this House, and of the whole country whose eyes are fixed upon it with anxiety and agitation—will he presume to repeat his threat? or will any one on his behalf?"—turning a glance of withering scorn towards Mr O'Squeal—"Sir, I pause for a reply!"—And he did pause—several seconds elapsing in dead silence, which was presently, however, broken in a manner that was perfectly unprecedented, and most astounding. "Twas a reply to his question; but such as, had he anticipated it, he would never have put that question, or paused for its answer.

"*Cock-a-doodle-do-o-o-o!*" issued, with inimitable fidelity of tone and manner, from immediately behind Lord Bulfinch, who sprang from his seat as if he had been shot. Every one started; Mr Vivid recoiled a pace or two from the table—and then a universal peal of laughter echoed from all quarters of the House, not excepting even the

strangers' gallery. The speaker was convulsed, and could not rise to call "order." Lord Bulfinch laughed himself almost into fits; even those immediately behind Mr Vivid were giving way to uncontrollable laughter, at so comical and monstrous an issue. He himself tried for a moment to join in the laugh, but in vain; he was terribly disconcerted and confounded. This disgusting incident had done away with the effect of his whole speech; and in twenty-four hours' time, the occurrence would be exciting merriment and derision in every corner of the kingdom!

"Order! order! order!" cried the Speaker, his face red and swollen with scarce subdued laughter. Several times Mr Vivid attempted to resume, but only occasioning renewed peals of laughter. Still he persevered; and, with much presence of mind, made a pointed and witty allusion to Rome, saved by the cackling of a goose, in which manner he said the ministers hoped that night to be saved! "Twas, however, plainly useless; and after a moment or two's pause of irresolution, he yielded to his miserable fate, with visible vexation abruptly concluded his observations, gathered hastily together his papers, and resumed his seat and his hat—a signal for renewed laughter and triumphant cheering from the ministerial side of the House. Up then started Mr O'Squeal—as it were under cover of the cock—and dashed hold off at one or two of the weakest points which had been made by his discomfited adversary, which he dealt with dexterously enough; and then threw up a vast number of rhetorical fireworks, amidst the glitter and blaze of which he sat down, cheered enthusiastically. "Twas our friend Mr Titmouse that had worked this wonder, and entirely changed the fate of the day! Up rose Mr O'Squeal's dreaded opponent—but in vain; he was quite crestfallen; evidently in momentary apprehension of receiving an interruption similar to that which Mr Vivid had experienced. He was nervous and fidgety—as well he might be; and would most assuredly have shared

the fate of Mr Vivid, but that Titmouse was, not without great difficulty, restrained by the grateful but considerate Lord Bulfinch, on the ground that the desired effect had been produced, and would be only impaired by a repetition. The debate came somewhat abruptly to a close—the ministerial side clamouring furiously for a division—and the opposition were beaten by a majority of a hundred and thirty—which really looked something like a working majority.

This happy occurrence at once brought Mr Titmouse into notice, and great favour with his party;—well, indeed, it might, for he had become a powerful auxiliary; and need it be added, how dreaded and detested he was by their opponents? How could it be otherwise, with even their leading speakers, who could scarcely ever afterwards venture on anything a trifle out of the common way—a little higher flight than usual—being in momentary apprehension of being suddenly brought down by some such disgusting and ludicrous interruption as the one I have mentioned, indicating the effect which the ambitious speaker was producing upon—a cat, a donkey, a cock, or a puppy? Ah, me! what a sheep's eye each of them, as he went on, cast towards Titmouse! And if ever he was observed to be absent, there was a sensible improvement in the tone and spirit of the opposition speakers. The ministerial journals all over the country worked the joke well; and in their leading articles against any of Mr Vivid's speeches, would "sum up all, in one memorable and crushing word—'*cock-a-doodle-doo!*'"

As is generally the case, the signal success of Mr Titmouse brought into the field a host of imitators, in the House; and their performances, inferior though they were, becoming more and more frequent, gave quite a new character to the proceedings of that dignified deliberative assembly. At length, however, it was found necessary to pass a resolution of the House against such practices; and it was entered on the journals, that thence

forth no honourable member should interrupt business by whistling, singing, or imitating the sounds of birds or animals (it was proposed to add fishes—but after an entire evening's debate, the motion was negatived, on the ground, that there were no means of ascertaining what sounds fishes could make), or making any other disgusting noise whatsoever.

The political importance thus acquired by Mr Titmouse—and which he enjoyed till the passing of the above resolution, by which it was cut up root and branch—had naturally an elevating effect upon him; as you might have perceived, had you only once seen him swaggering along the House to his seat behind the front Treasury bench, dressed in his usual style of fashion, and with his quizzing-glass stuck into his eye. Mr O'Gibbet invariably greeted him with the utmost cordiality, and would often, at a pinching part of an opposition speech, turn round and invoke his powers, by the exclamation—"Now, now, Titty!" on which, however, there were loud cries of "Order! order!" He dined, in due course, with the Speaker—as usual, in full court-dress; and, having got a little champagne in his head, insisted on going through his leading "imitations," infinitely to the amusement of some half-dozen of the guests, and all the servants. His circle of acquaintance was extending every day; he became a welcome guest, as an object of real curiosity. He was not a man, however, to be always enjoying the hospitality of others, without at least offering a return; and, at the suggestion of an experienced friend in the House, he commenced a series of "parliamentary dinners," presumptuous little puppy! at the Gliddington Hotel. They went off with much *éclat*, and were obsequiously chronicled in the daily journals, as thus:

"On Saturday, Mr Titmouse, M.P., entertained (his third dinner given this session) at the Gliddington Hotel, the following amongst other distinguished members of the House of Commons: Lord Nothing Nowhere,

Sir Simper Silly, Mr Flummery, Mr O'Gibbet, Mr Outlaw, Lord Beetle, Colonel Quod, &c. &c."

Mr Titmouse, at length, thought himself warranted in inviting Lord Bulfinch, the SPEAKER, and LORD FIRE-BRAND, the Foreign Secretary, all of whom, however, unexpectedly declined, pleading previous engagements. I can hardly, in fairness, give Mr Titmouse the credit of these latter proceedings; which were, in fact, suggested to him, in the first instance, by two or three young wags in the House; who, barring a little difference in the way of bringing up, were every whit as great fools and coxcombs as himself, and equally entitled to the confidence of their favoured constituencies, and of the country, as well calculated for the purpose of practical legislation, and that remodelling of the national institutions of the country, upon which the new House of Commons seemed bent.

Have you, reader, ever given your vote and interest to return a TITMOUSE to Parliament?

"Twas truly delightful to see the tables of these young gentlemen groaning under daily accumulations of parliamentary documents, containing all sorts of political and statistical information, collected and published with vast labour and expense, for the purpose of informing their powerful intellects upon the business of the country, so that they might come duly prepared to the important discussions in the House, on all questions of domestic and foreign policy. As for Mr Titmouse, he never relished the idea of perusing and studying these troublesome and repulsive documents —page after page, filled with long rows of figures, tables of prices, of exchanges, &c., reports of the evidence, *verbatim et literatim*, taken in question

and answer before every committee that sat; all sorts of expensive and troublesome "returns," moved for by any one that chose; he rather contented himself with attending to what went on in the House; and at the close of the session, all the documents in question became the perquisite of his valet, who got a good round sum for them (uncut) as waste paper.

It is not difficult to understand the pleasure which my little friend experienced, in dispensing such favours and courtesies, as those of orders for the gallery, and franks, to applicants for them; for all his show of feeling it a "bore" to be asked. 'Twas these small matters which, as it were, brought home to him a sense of his dignity, and made him *feel* the possession of station and authority. I think the following application was more gratifying to him, than any he received:—

"T. Tag-rag's best respects to T. Titmouse, Esq. M.P., and begs to say how greatly he will account y^e favour of obtaining an order to be Admitted to the Gallery of the House of Commons for to-morrow night, to hear the debate on the Bill for Doing away with the *Nuisance* of Dustmen's cries of a morning.

"With Mrs T.'s and daughter's respectful comp^{ts}."

"T. TITMOUSE, Esq. M.P."

On receiving this, Titmouse looked out for the finest sheet of glossy extra-superfine gilt Bath post, scented, and in a fine flourishing hand, wrote as follows:—

"Please To Admit y^e Barer To The Galery of The House of Commons.—T. TITMOUSE. Wednesday, March 6th, 18—."

CHAPTER VI.

MR TITMOUSE BECOMES A FELLOW OF THE CREDULOUS SOCIETY, UNDER THE AUSPICES OF DR DIABOLUS GANDER; PERFORMS SCIENTIFIC EXPERIMENTS IN THE STREETS AT NIGHT, AND SAVES THE MINISTRY.

THE reader, who must have been startled and delighted by the unexpectedly rapid progress of Mr Titmouse in parliamentary life, will be, doubtless, as much interested by hearing that corresponding distinction awaited that astute gentleman in the regions of science and literature ; his pioneer thither being one who had long enjoyed a certain sort of distinction, or rather notoriety ; successfully combining the character and pursuits of scholar and philosopher with those of a man of fashion — I mean a Doctor DIABOLUS GANDER. Though upwards of sixty, he found means so effectually to disguise his age, that he would have passed for barely forty. He had himself so strong a predilection for dress, that the moment he saw Titmouse, he conceived a secret respect for that gentleman ; and, in fact, the two dressed pretty nearly in the same style. The Doctor passed for a philosopher, in society. He had spent most of his days in drilling youth in the elements of the mathematics ; of which he had the same kind and degree of knowledge that is possessed of English literature by an old governess who has spent her life in going over the first part of Lindley Murray's English Grammar with children. Just so much did the Doctor know of the scope, object, and application of the mathematics. His great distinguishing talent was, that of rendering the most abstruse science "popular;" — *i. e.* utterly unintelligible to those who understood science, and very exciting

and entertaining to those who did not. He had a knack of getting hold of obscure and starving men of genius and science, and secretly availing himself of their labours. He would pay them with comparative liberality to write, in an elegant style, on subjects of pure and mixed science ; but when published, the name of Diabolus Gander would appear *solus*, upon the title-page ; and, to enable the Doctor to do this with some comfort to his conscience, he would actually copy out the whole of the manuscript, and make a few alterations in it. But, alas ! *omne quod tetigit faedavit*; and it invariably happened that these were the very *maculae* pitched upon, exposed, and ridiculed by reviewers. No man could spread his small stock of acquirement over a larger surface than Dr Gander ; no man be more successful in ingratiating himself with those persons so useful to an enterprising empiric — viz. titled and wealthy fools. He paid constant court to Titmouse, from the first moment he saw him ; and took the liberty of calling — unasked — the next day, at his rooms in the Albany. He soon satisfied Titmouse that his glib visitor was a great philosopher, whom it was an advantage and a distinction to be acquainted with. He took my little admiring friend, for instance, to hear him deliver a lecture at the Hanover Square Rooms, to a crowd of fine ladies and old gentlemen, who greatly applauded all he said, upon a subject equally abstruse, interesting, and instructive — viz. the occult qualities of

Triangles. In short, he was indefatigable in his attentions to Titmouse, and was a frequent guest at his dinner-table. He gave Titmouse, on one of these occasions, an amazing account of the distinction accruing to a member of any of the great learned societies; and, in fact, quite inflamed his little imagination upon the subject—sounding him as to his wish to become a member of some great society, in common with half the dukes, marquesses, earls, and barons in the kingdom—in particular his own august kinsman, the Earl of Dreddlington, himself.

"Why—a—'pon my soul—" quoth Titmouse simpering, as he tossed off his tenth glass of champagne with the bland and voluble Doctor—"I—I—'pon my life—shouldn't much dislike a thingumbob or two at the end of my name—but what's the figure?"

"Certainly, I myself, as a zealous lover of science, my dear sir, consider her honours always well bestowed on those eminent in rank and station; though they may not have gone through the drudgery of scientific details, sir, their countenance *irradiates* the pale cheek of unobtrusive science!"

"Ya—a—s, 'pon honour, I should think so!" quoth Titmouse, not exactly, however, comprehending the Doctor's fine figure of speech.

"Now, you see, my dear Mr Titmouse," continued the Doctor, "the greatest society in all England, out and out, is the CREDULOUS SOCIETY. I happen to have some leetle influence there; through which I have been able, I am happy to say, to introduce several noblemen."

"Have you, by Jove?" cried Titmouse; "but what the devil do they do when they're there?"

"Do, my dear sir! They meet for the purpose of—consider the distinguished men that are fellows of that society! It was only the other day that the duke of Tadcaster told me, (the day after I had succeeded in getting his Grace elected), that he was as proud of the letters 'F.C.S.', added to his name, as he was of his dukedom!"

"By Jove!—No—but—'pon honour bright—did he? Can you really get me into it?" inquired Titmouse eagerly.

"I—oh—why—you see, my dear sir, you're certainly rather young," quoth the Doctor gravely, pausing and rubbing his chin; "if it could be managed, it would be a splendid thing for you, wouldn't it?"

"By jingo, I should think so!" replied Titmouse.

"I think I've been asked by at least a dozen noblemen for my influence, but I've not felt myself warrant-ed!"

"Oh, well! then in course there's an end of it," interrupted Titmouse with an air of disappointment; "and cuss me if ever I cared a pin about it—I see I've not the ghost of a chance."

"I don't know that either," replied the Doctor musingly. His design had been all along to confer sufficient obligation on Titmouse, to induce him to lend the Doctor a sum of four or five hundred pounds, to embark in some wild scheme or other, and also to make Titmouse useful to him for other purposes, from time to time.—"As you are so young," continued the Doctor, "I am afraid it will be necessary, in some sort of way, to give you a kind of scientific pretension—ah, by Archimedes! bnt I have it!—I have it!—You see, I've a treatise in the press, and nearly ready for publication, upon a particularly profound subject—but, you'll understand me, explained in a perfectly popular manner—in fact, my dear sir, it is a grand discovery of my own, which will in future ages be placed side by side of that of Sir Isaac Newton!"

"Is he a member of it too?" inquired Titmouse.

"No, my dear sir!" quoth the Doctor, slightly staggered: "not bodily; but his spirit is with us! We feel it influencing all our deliberations; though he died a quarter of a century before we were established! But to return to the discovery I was mentioning; as Sir Isaac discovered the principle of GRAVITATION, other-

wise Weight, or Heaviness, so, Mr Titmouse, I have discovered the principle of LIGHTNESS!"

" You don't say so! 'Pon my life, amazing!" exclaimed Mr Titmouse, bolting a large glass of claret.

" And equally true, as amazing. As soon as I shall have indicated its tendencies and results, my discovery will affect a revolution in the existing system of physical science."

" Ah! that's what they talked about in the House last night—Revolution. 'Pon my soul, I don't like revolutions though—Lord Bulfinch says he doesn't like 'em, either!" exclaimed Titmouse uneasily.

" I am speaking of something quite different, my dear Titmouse," said Dr Gander, blandly, " but to proceed with what I had intended. Since I have been sitting here, my dear sir, it has occurred to me that I have an excellent opportunity of evincing my sense of your personal kindness towards me, and my appreciation of your distinguished position—Sir, I intend to DEDICATE my work to you!"

" Sir, you're amazing kind—most uncommon polite!" quoth Titmouse, who knew no more than a trout what a "dedication" meant.—Within a week or two's time, sure enough, appeared a handsome octavo volume, beautifully printed and splendidly bound, entitled,

" RESEARCHES into Physical Science, with a view to the Establishment of a NEW PRINCIPLE—

LIGHTNESS.

BY

DIABOLUS GANDER, ESQUIRE.

Ph. D.; F.C.S.; Q.U.A.K.; G.O.S.; Secretary of the *Empirical Society*; Corresponding Member of the *Leipzig Longitude Society*; Vice-President of the *Peripatetic Gastronomic Association*; and Member of Seventeen Philosophical and Literary Societies in Kamschatka, Madagascar, Tartary, and Little Britain; &c. &c. &c.

And it bore the following "Dedication"—

" To TITTLEBAT TITMOUSE, Esq., M.P.
&c. &c. &c.,
This volume is respectfully inscribed,
by his obedient, obliged,
faithful, humble servant,
DIABOLUS GANDER."

The work being vigorously pushed, and systematically puffed in all directions, of course brought the honoured name of Mr Titmouse a good deal before the scientific public; and about three weeks afterwards might have been seen the following "Testimonial," suspended against the screen of the public room of the Credulous Society, in support of Mr Titmouse's pretensions to be elected into it:—

" TESTIMONIAL.—We, the undersigned, Fellows of the CREDULOUS SOCIETY, hereby certify that, from our personal knowledge of TITTLEBAT TITMOUSE, ESQUIRE, M.P., we believe him to be a gentleman greatly attached to credulous science, and equally capable and desirous of promoting its interests; and, as such, deserving of being elected a fellow of the Credulous Society.

" DREDDLINGTON.

" TANTALLAN.

" WOODEN SPOON.

" FLIMSY CROTCHET.

" DIABOLUS GANDER.

" PERIWINKLE PARALLELOGRAM,

" PLACID NOODLE."

The above distinguished names were procured by Dr Gander; and thereupon the election of Mr Titmouse became almost a matter of certainty—especially as, on the appointed day, Dr Gander secured the attendance of some amiable old gentlemen, fellows of the Society, (though why they should have been such no one knew), who believed the Doctor to be all he pretended to be. The above testimonial having, in due course, been read from the chair, Mr Titmouse was balloted for, and declared elected unanimously a Fellow of the Credulous Society. He was prevented from attending on the ensuing meeting by a great debate, and an expected early division: then (I can disguise nothing).

from the reader) by sheer intoxication ; and again by his being unable to return in time from Croydon, where he had been attending a grand prize-fight, being the backer of one of the principal ruffians, Billy Bully, his boxing-master. On the fourth evening, however, having dined with the Earl of Dredlington, he drove with his lordship to the Society's apartments, was formally introduced, and solemnly admitted ; from which moment he was entitled to have his name stand thus :—

"TITTLEBAT TITMOUSE, Esq., M.P., F.C.S."

—And heaven knows how much higher he might not have immediately mounted, in the scale of social distinction, but that he came to a sudden rupture with his "guide, philosopher, and friend," Dr Gander ; who, on venturing at length to make his long-meditated application to Titmouse for a temporary loan, to enable him, Dr Gander, to prosecute some extensive philosophical experiments—[*i. e.*, *inter nos*, on public credulity]—was unhesitatingly refused by Titmouse ; who, on being pressed by the Doctor, abused him in terms of uophilosophic licence, and finally ordered him out of the room ! He quitted the presence of his ungrateful protégé with disgust, and in despair — nor without reason : for that very night he received a propulsion towards the Fleet Prison, which suggested to his philosophical mind several ingenious reflections concerning the *attraction of repulsion*. There he lay for three months, till he sent for the tyrant who had deposited him there, and who had been his bookseller and publisher ; and the Doctor so dazzled him by the outline of a new and splendid speculation—a series of immortal works to be called THE GANDER GALLERY—that his credulous creditor relented, and set his ingenious and enterprising debtor once more at large.

To return, however, to Mr Titmouse. It was not long after his election into the Credulous Society, that a deputation from the committee of the Association for the Promotion of Civil and

Religious Discord waited upon him, at his apartments in the Albany, to solicit him, in flattering and complimentary terms, to preside at their next annual meeting, at the Stonemasons' Hall : and, after some modest expressions of distrust, as to his fitness for so distinguished a post, he yielded to their obsequious entreaties. He ordered in, while they were with him, a substantial lunch, of which they partook with infinite relish ; and having done ample justice to his pork-pies, ale, and spirits, the worthy gentlemen withdrew, charmed with the intelligence and affability of their distinguished host, and anticipating that they should have in Mr Titmouse, "one of the most rising young men in the Liberal line," an effective chairman, and who would make their meeting go off with great *éclat*. How Titmouse would have got through the task he had undertaken, the reader must be left to conjecture ; seeing that, in point of fact, "circumstances, over which he had no control," prevented him from fulfilling his promise. The meeting waited for him at least three-quarters of an hour ; when, finding that neither he nor any tidings of him came, they elected some one else into the chair, and got on as well as they could. I daresay the reader is rather curious to know how all this came to pass ; and, having no motive for concealing the truth, I will inform him. On the evening of the day before that on which he had promised to preside at Stonemasons' Hall, he dined out with one or two choice spirits ; and about two o'clock in the morning, they all sallied forth, not much the better for wine, in quest of adventures. Mr Titmouse gave some excellent imitations of donkeys, cats, and pigs, as they walked along arm-in-arm ; and nearly succeeded in tripping up an old watchman, who had crawled out asthmatically to announce the hour. Then they rung every bell they passed, and, encouraged by impunity, proceeded to sport of a still more interesting and exciting description—viz. twisting knockers off doors. Titmouse was by far the most drunk of the party, and

wrenched off several knockers in a resolute and reckless manner, placing them successively in his pocket—where, also, his companions contrived, unknown to him, to deposit their spoils—till the weight was such as seriously to increase the difficulty of keeping his balance. When tired of this sport, it was agreed that they should extinguish every lamp they passed. No sooner said than done; and Titmouse volunteered to commence. Assisted by his companions, he clambered up a lamp-post at the corner of St James's Street; and holding with one hand by the bar, while his legs clung round the iron post, with the other hand he opened the window of the lamp; and while in the act of blowing it out, "Watch! watch!" cried the voices of several people rushing round the corner; a rattle was sprung; away scampered his companions in different directions; and after holding on where he was, for a moment or two, in confusion and alarm, down slid poor Titmouse, and dropped into the arms of three accursed watchmen, who had sprung their rattles with all their force, around whom was gathered a little crowd of persons, all roused from sleep by the pulling of their bells, and the noise made in wrenching off their knockers. In a pretty passion they all were, shaking their fists in the face of the captured delinquent, and accompanying him, with menacing gestures, to the watch-house. There having been safely lodged, he was put into a dark cell, where he presently fell asleep; nor did he wake till he was summoned to go off, the next morning, to Bow Street. There he found a host of victims of his overnight's exploits. He stoutly denied having been concerned in despoiling a single door of its knocker!—on which a breeches-maker near him, furiously lifted up the prisoner's heavy coat-tails, and exclaimed eagerly—"Your worship, your worship! see, he's got his knocket full of pockers! he's got his knocket full of pockers—see here, your worship"—"What do you mean, sir, by such gibberish?"

inquired the magistrate, in so stern a tone as drew the speaker's attention to the little transposition of letters which he had made, in his headlong haste to detect the falsehood of the delinquent; who, finding the dismal strait to which he was driven, and feeling really ill, begged for mercy—which, after a severe rebuke, the pallid culprit being confronted by seven knockers lying before him in a row, all having been taken out of his own pockets, he obtained, on condition of his making compensation to the injured parties, who compounded with him for twelve pounds.* After paying a couple of pounds to the poor-box, he was discharged; crawled into a coach, and, in a pitiable condition, reached his rooms about one o'clock, and got into bed in a truly deplorable state—never once recollecting that, at that precise hour, he ought to have been taking the chair of the meeting of the Association for the Promotion of Civil and Religious Discord!—As, however, his misfortunes were, in the newspapers, assigned, not to "Tittlebat Titmouse," but to one "*John Smith*," the exact state of the case never became known to the worthy gentlemen who had been so unaccountably deprived of his services; and who, on inquiry, were told by his fluent valet, that Mr Titmouse's late hours at the House, had brought on a slight and sudden attack of—jaundice; on hearing which, they begged he might be assured of their respectful sympathy, and hearty wishes for his restoration! and tried hard to sound the valet on the subject of his master's compensating for his absence by some donation or subscription; but the fellow was obtuse, and they were compelled to depart disappointed—and with no glimpse of a second lunch.

I should have thought that the foregoing would prove a lesson to Mr

* These offences are now dealt with much more seriously; several late statutes empowering the police magistrates to fine the offenders, and even commit them to the tread-mill. The effect has been to interfere seriously with this species of gentlemanly nocturnal amusement.

Titmouse, and restrain him, for some time, from yielding to his cursed propensity to drink. Yet was it otherwise—and I shall tell the matter exactly as it happened. Within a fortnight after the mischance which I have been describing, Titmouse dined with the members of a sort of pugilistic club, which met every fortnight, for the purpose of settling matters connected with the "ring." On the present occasion there had been a full muster, for they had to arrange the preliminaries for a grand contest for the championship of England—to which Titmouse's master, Mr Billy Bully, aspired. Titmouse had scarcely ever enjoyed himself more than on that exciting occasion; and, confident of his man, had backed his favourite, pretty freely. Towards eleven o'clock, he found the room somewhat close—and it was not to be wondered at, when you considered the numbers with whom it was stuffed, and the dreadful quantity of hard ale, harder port-wine, and poisonous gin-and-water, which the little wretch had swallowed since sitting down to dinner. About the hour I have named, however, he, Sir Pumpkin Puppy, and one or two others, all with cigars in their mouths, sallied forth to walk about town, in search of sport. I have hardly patience to write it—but positively they had not proceeded half-way down the Haymarket when they got into a downright "*row*;" and egged on by his companions, and especially inwardly instigated by the devil himself, Titmouse, after grossly insulting a little one-eyed, one-legged, bald-headed old waterman attached to the coach-stand there, challenged him to fight, and forthwith flung away his cigar, and threw himself into boxing attitude, amidst the jeers and laughter of the spectators—who, however, formed a sort of ring in a trice. At it they went, *instanter*. Titmouse squared about with a sort of disdainful shewiness—in the midst of which he suddenly received a nasty teaser on his nose and shoulder, from his active, hardy, and experienced antagonist, which brought our senator to the

ground, the blood gushing from his nose in a copious stream. Sir Pumpkin quickly picked him up, shook him, and set him fairly at his man again. Nearer and nearer stumped the old fellow to the devoted "swell," who, evidently "groggy," squared in the most absurd way imaginable for a moment or two, when he received his enemy's "*one two*" in his eye, and on his mouth, and again dropped down.

"He's drunk—he can't fight no more than a baby; I won't stand agin him any more," quoth the fair and stout-hearted old waterman. "It warn't any o' my seeking; but if he thought to come it over an old cripple like me"—

"Bravo! bravo!" cried his comrades. "Come along, old chap—come along," said one; "if I don't give you a jolly quartern, may I stick here without a fare all this blessed night;" and the speaker led off the victor to the public-house opposite, while Titmouse's friends carried him away, nearly insensible, to a tavern a few doors off. Having given directions that he should be forthwith taken to a bedroom and washed, they ordered broiled bones and mulled claret for themselves. After about an hour and a half's nap, Titmouse, who probably had benefited rather than suffered from his blood-letting, rejoined his friends, and called for a cigar and a glass of cold brandy-and-water; having had which, they set off homeward: he reaching his rooms about one o'clock, with a black eye, a swollen nose and mouth, thick and indistinct speech, and unsteady step; in fact, in a much worse pickle than he had as yet exhibited to his valet, who told him, while preparing for him a glass of brandy and soda-water, that no fewer than five messengers had been at his rooms. While he was yet speaking, a thundering knock was heard at the outer-door, and on its being opened, in rushed, breathlessly, Mr Phelim O'Doodle.

"Titmouse!—Titmouse! Och, murther and thunder, where are ye? Where have ye been, wid ye?" he gasped—

"When—a-hen—on—water—swims—
Too-ra-laddy—
Too-ra-lad-lad-lad"—

drowsily sung Titmouse—it being part of a song he had heard thrice encored that evening after dinner—at the same time staggering towards O'Doodle.

"Och, botheration take your too-r-a-lady! Come, fait—by the Powers! clap your hat on, and button your coat, and off to the House—immediately—or it's all up with us, an' out we go every unhappy mother's son of us—an' the bastely Tories 'll be in. Come! come!—off wid ye, I say! I've a coach at the door"—

"I—(hiccup)—I sha'n't—can't—pon my life"—

"Och, off wid ye!—isn't it mad that Mr O'Gibbet is wid ye?"—

"He's one eye—aha! and one leg—Too-ra-laddy," hiccuped Mr Titmouse.

"Devil burn me if I don't tie ye hand an' foot together!" cried O'Doodle impetuously. "What the devil have ye been about wid that black eye o' yours, and—but I'll spake about it in the coach. Off wid ye! Isn't time worth a hundred pounds a minute?"—

Within a minute or two's time O'Doodle had got him safely into the coach, and down to St Stephen's they rattled at top speed. There was going on, indeed, a desperate fight—a final trial of strength between ministers and the opposition, on a vote of want of confidence; and a division expected every minute. Prodigious had been the efforts of both parties—the whip unprecedented. Lord Bulfinch had, early in the evening, explicitly stated that ministers would resign unless they gained a majority; and, to their infinite vexation and astonishment, three of their stanch adherents—Titmouse being one—were missing just at the critical moment. The opposition had been more fortunate; every man of theirs had come up—and, knowing the number of 'noses,' they were shouting tremendously, "Divide! divide! divide!"—while, on the other hand, ministers were putting up men, one after another, to speak against time, though not one

syllable they said could be heard, in order to get a chance of their three missing men coming up. If none of them came, ministers would be exactly even with their opponents: in which case they were much afraid that the country would expect them to resign. Up the stairs and into the lobby came O'Doodle, breathlessly, with his prize.

"Och, my dear O'Doodle!—Titmouse, ye little drunken devil, where have ye been?" commenced Mr O'Gibbet, on whom O'Doodle stumbled suddenly.

"Thank Heaven! How fortunate!" exclaimed Mr Flummery, both he and O'Gibbet in a state of intense anxiety and great excitement.

"In with him!—in with him!—by Jove, they're clearing the gallery!" gasped Mr Flummery, while he rushed into the House, to make the way clear for O'Doodle and O'Gibbet, who were literally carrying in Titmouse between them.

"Sir!—Mr Flummery!" gasped O'Doodle—"ye won't forget what I have done to-night, will ye?"

"No, no—honour! In with you! In with you! A moment and all's lost."

They reached, however, the House in safety, Mr O'Gibbet waving his hand in triumph.

"Oh, ye droll little devil! where have you been hiding?" he hastily whispered, as he deposited the insensible Titmouse on the nearest bench, and sat beside him. Mr O'Gibbet took off his hat, and wiped his reeking head and face. Merciful powers! what a triumph!—and in the very nick of time.—Titmouse had saved the ministry! Tremendous was now the uproar in the House, almost every one present shouting, "Divide!—divide!"

"Strangers, withdraw," cried the Speaker.

Then, *at it* they went, with an air of tumultuous and irrepressible excitement; but, through Titmouse, the ministers triumphed. The numbers were announced—

Ayes,	:	:	:	:	301
Noes,	:	:	:	:	300

Majority for Ministers, 1

On which glorious and decisive result, there burst forth vociferous cheering on the ministerial side of the House, and vehement counter-cheering on the opposition side, which lasted for several minutes. The noise, indeed, was so prodigious, that it almost roused Titmouse from the sort of stupor into which he had sunk. Mr O'Doodle accompanied him home; and, after drinking a couple of tumblers of whisky-and-water with him, took his departure — caring nothing that he had left Titmouse on the floor, in a state of dangerous insensibility; from which, however, in due time he recovered, but was confined to his bed, by a violent bilious attack, for nearly a week. Mr O'Doodle's services to

the government were not forgotten. A few days afterwards he vacated his seat, having received the appointment of sub-inspector of political caricatures in Ireland, with a salary of six hundred pounds a-year for life. But — uno avulso, non deficit alter Aureus! — His place in the House was immediately filled up by his brother, Mr Trigger O'Doodle, who kept a shooting gallery in Dublin. Profuse were Phelim's thanks to Mr O'Gibbet, when that gentleman announced to him his good fortune, exclaiming, at the same time, with a sly wink and smile — "Ye see what it is to render service to the state — aha! Aisy, aisy! — softly, say I. Isn't *that* the way to get along?"

CHAPTER VII.

LADY CECILIA IS MARRIED TO MR TITMOUSE; AND THE EARL ENTERS, UNDER MR GAMMON'S AUSPICES, ON AN ADVENTUROUS CAREER. AN AFFECTING LETTER OF LADY CECILIA TITMOUSE.

THE injuries which Mr Titmouse had received in his encounter with the waterman, more particularly his black eye, prevented him from making his appearance in public, or at Lord Dredlington's, or in the House, for several days after he had recovered from the bilious attack of which I have spoken. His non-attendance at the House, however, signified little, since both parties had been so thoroughly exhausted by their late trial of strength, as to require, for some time, rest and quietness, to enable them to resume the public business of the country, which consisted of each member looking keenly after his own individual interests. As soon as his eye, having passed through the stages of black, blue, green, and yellow, was fairly convalescent, the first place to which he ventured out, was his new

residence in Park Lane; which, having been taken for him, under the superintendence of the Earl of Dredlington and Mr Gammon, some month or two before, was now rapidly being furnished, in order to be in readiness to receive his lady and himself, very shortly after his marriage — his parliamentary duties not admitting of a prolonged absence from town. The former event had, as usual, been already prematurely announced in the newspapers several times, as on the eve of taking place.

The courtship went on easily and smoothly. Neither of them seemed anxious for the other's society, though they contrived to evince, in the presence of third persons, a decent degree of gratification at meeting. He did all which he was instructed it was necessary for a man of fashion to do.

He attended her and the Earl to the opera repeatedly, as also to other places of fashionable resort: he had danced with her occasionally; but, to tell the truth, it was only at the vehement instance of the Earl her father, that she ever consented to stand up with one whose person, whose carriage, whose motions were so ineffably vulgar and ridiculous as those of Mr Titmouse—her affianced husband. He had several times made her rather expensive presents of jewellery, and would have purchased for her a great stock of clothing, of which he justly considered himself an excellent judge, if she would have permitted it. He had, moreover, been a constant guest at the Earl's table, where he was under greater restraint than anywhere else. Of such indiscretions and eccentricities as I have just been recording, the Earl and Lady Cecilia knew, or were properly supposed to know, nothing. 'Twas not for them to have their eyes upon him while sowing his wild oats—so thought the Earl; who, however, had frequent occasion for congratulating himself in respect of Mr Titmouse's political celebrity, and also the marks of distinction conferred upon him, in the literary and scientific world, of which the Earl was himself so distinguished an ornament. Titmouse had presented copies, gorgeously bound, of Dr Gander's Treatise on Lightness, both to the Earl and the Lady Cecilia; and the flattering dedication to Titmouse, by Dr Gander, really operated not a little in his favour with his future lady. What effect might have been produced upon her ladyship, had she been apprised of the fact, that the aforesaid dedication had appeared in only twenty copies, having been cancelled directly Dr Gander had ascertained the futility of his expectations from Titmouse, I do not know; but I believe she never was informed of that circumstance. As far as her future lord's dress went, she had contrived, through the interference of the Earl and Mr Gammon, for whom she had conceived a singular respect, to abate a little of its fantastic absurdity—its

execrable vulgarity. Nothing, however, seemed capable of effecting any material change in the man, although his continued intercourse with refined society could hardly fail to produce some advantageous alteration in his manners. As for anything further, Tittlebat Titmouse remained the same vulgar, heartless, presumptuous, ignorant creature he had ever been: *for, saith the Wise Man, though thou shouldest Bray a fool in a mortar among wheat, with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him.*

I perceive in the Lady Cecilia no qualities to excite respect or affection; yet I pity her from my soul when I contemplate her coming union with Titmouse. One thing I know, that as soon as ever she had bound herself irrevocably to him, she began to think of at least fifty men, whom she had ever spurned, but whom then she would have welcomed with all the ardour and affection of which her cold nature was susceptible. As she had never been conspicuous for animation, vivacity, or energy, the gloom which more and more frequently overshadowed her, whenever her thoughts turned towards Mr Titmouse, attracted scarce any one's attention. There were those, however, who could have spoken of her mental disquietude at the approach of her cheerless nuptials—I mean her maid Annette, and Miss Macspleuchan. To say that she loathed the bare idea of her union with Titmouse—his person, manners, and character—would not perhaps be exactly correct, since she had not the requisite strength of character; but she contemplated her future lord and master with mingled feelings of apprehension, dislike, and disgust. She generally fled for support to the comfortable notion of *fate*, which, she conceived, had assigned her such a husband. Heaven had denied poor Lady Cecilia all power of contemplating the future; of anticipating consequences; of reflecting upon the step she was about to take. Miss Macspleuchan, however, did so for her; but, being placed in a situation of delicacy and difficulty, acted with cautious reserve,

whenever the hateful and painful-
ly ridiculous subject was mentioned.
Her, Lady Cecilia had not vouchsafed to
consult, before her ladyship had
committed herself to Titmouse; and,
after that, interference was useless
and unwarrantable.

Lady Cecilia late one afternoon en-
tered her dressing-room, pale and
dispirited, as had been latterly her
wont; and, with a deep sigh, sank
into her easy chair. Annette, on
her ladyship's entrance, was leaning
against the window-frame, reading a
book, which she immediately closed
and laid down. "What are you read-
ing?" inquired Lady Cecilia, lan-
guidly.

"Oh, nothing particular, my lady!"
replied Annette, colouring a little;
"it was only the prayer-book. I—I
—was looking at—the marriage-ser-
vice, my lady. I wanted to see what
it was that your ladyship has to
say"—

"It's not particularly amusing, An-
nette. I think it very unmeaning!
You might have been better em-
ployed!"

"La, my lady—now *I* should have
thought it quite interesting, if *I* had
been in your la'ship's situation!"

"Well, what is it that they expect
me to repeat?"

"Oh! I'll read it, my lady—here it
is," replied Annette, and read as fol-
lows:—

"*Then shall the priest say unto the*
woman, N, wilt thou have this man
to be thy wedded husband, to live to-
gether, after God's ordinance, in the
holy state of matrimony? Wilt thou
obey him, serve him, love, honour,
and keep him, in sickness, and in
health, and, forsaking all other, keep
thee only unto him, so long as ye both
shall live?

"*The woman shall answer, I*
will."

"Well—it's only a form, you know,
Annette—and I daresay no one ever
gives it a thought," said Lady Cecilia,
struggling to suppress a sigh.

"Then," continued Annette, "your
la'ship will have to say a good deal
after the parson—but I beg your

la'ship's pardon—it's (in your case)
the bishop. Here it is:—

"I, N, take thee, M, to be my wed-
ded husband, to have and to hold,
from this day forward, for better for
worse, for richer for poorer, in sick-
ness, and in health, to love, cher-
ish."

"Yes, yes—I hear," interrupted
Lady Cecilia faintly, turning pale;
"I know it all—that will do, An-
nette" —

"There's only a word more, my
lady:—

"And obey, till death us do part,
according to God's holy ordinance;
and thereto I give thee my troth.
All this your la'ship says, with your
right hand holding Mr Titmouse's."

Here a visible tremour passed
through Lady Cecilia. "You may
leave me alone, Annette, a little
while," said she; "I don't feel quite
well."

"La, my lady, a'n't your la'ship
late, already? Your la'ship knows
how early her Grace dines, ever since
her illness."

"There's time enough; I'll ring for
you when I want you. And—stay—
you may as well leave your prayer-
book with me for a moment—it will
amuse me to look in it." Annette
did as she was bid; and the next mo-
ment her melancholy mistress was
alone. She did not, however, open the
book she had asked for, but fell into a
reverie, which was disturbed some
time afterwards, only by her maid
tapping at the door; and who, on en-
tering, told her that she had not one
moment to lose; that his lordship had
been dressed for some time. On this
her ladyship rose, and commenced her
toilet with a deep sigh.

"Your la'ship, I suppose, wears
your gold-coloured satin? it matches
so well with the pearls," said Annette,
going to the jewel-case.

"I sha'n't wear any pearls to-
day."

"Oh! my lady! not that beautiful
spray of Mr Titmouse's? Your la'ship
does look so well in it!"

"I sha'n't wear anything of Mr Tit-
—I mean," she added, colouring, "I

sha'n't wear anything in my hair to-day!"

Many and anxious, it may be easily believed, had been the conferences and negotiations between the Earl, Mr Gammon, and Mr Titmouse, with reference to the state of his property, and the settlement to be made on Lady Cecilia. It appeared that the extent of the encumbrances on the Yatton property was £35,000, and which Gammon had many ways of accounting for, without disclosing the amount of plunder which had fallen to the share of the firm—or rather to the senior partner. The interest on this sum (*viz.* £1750) would reduce Mr Titmouse's present income to £8250 per annum; but Gammon pledged himself that the rental of the estates could, with the greatest ease, be raised to £12,000, and that measures, in fact, were already in progress to effect so desirable a result. Then there was a sum of £20,000 due to Mr Titmouse from Mr Aubrey, on account of the mesne profits, £10,000 of which was guaranteed by Lord de la Zouch, and would shortly become payable with interest; and the remaining £10,000 could be at any time called in. The sum finally determined upon, as a settlement upon Lady Cecilia, was £3000 a-year—surely a very substantial "*consideration*," as the lawyers would say, for the "*faithful promise*" to be, by-and-by, made by her at the altar—and which, moreover, she conceived she had a prospect of having entirely to herself—really "*for her separate use*, exempt from the control, debts, and engagements of her said intended husband."

I am sorry to say that Lady Cecilia clung to the prospect of an almost immediate separation; which, she learned from several confidential friends, some of whom were qualified, by personal experience, to offer an opinion, was not a difficult matter, when a couple understood each other—but was becoming daily more frequent, on the ground of incompatibility of temper. A faint hint of the kind which she had once dropped to Miss Macsleuchian, was received in such a

manner as prevented Lady Cecilia from ever repeating it. As for the Earl, her father, I cannot say that he did not observe a depression of spirits in his daughter, increasing in proportion to the proximity of her marriage. Since, however, he had entirely reconciled himself to it, and was delighted at the approaching long-coveted reunion of the family interests, he did not think of her having any real objection to the arrangements. As for her lowness of spirits, and nervousness, doubtless, his lordship considered, every woman on the point of being married, experienced similar feelings. She herself, indeed, seldom if ever named the matter to her father in such a way as to occasion him uneasiness. In short, the affair seemed to be going on just as it ought to do; and even had it assumed an untoward aspect, circumstances had arisen which would have prevented the Earl from giving his wonted attention to what in any degree concerned his daughter.

In the first place, on his lordship's party coming into power, to his infinite amazement and disgust, his old post of Lord High Steward was filled up by some one else! So also was the office of Lord President of the Council, and, moreover, every other official post; and that, too, without any apology to the offended peer, or explanation of such a phenomenon as his entire exclusion from office. The Premier had, in fact, never once thought of his lordship while forming his administration; and, on being subsequently remonstrated with by a venerable peer, a common friend of the Premier and Lord Dredlington, had calmly and blandly expressed his regret that Lord Dredlington had not given him notice of his being still—"even in his advanced years"—disposed to hold office; and trusted that he should yet be able, and before any long time should have elapsed, to avail himself of the valuable services "of my Lord Dredlington." This was all that he could get from the courteous but marble-hearted Premier; and, for a long while, the Earl

could think of only one mode of sooth-ing his wounded feelings—viz. going about to his friends, and demonstrat-ing that the new Lord Steward, and the new Lord President, were every day displaying their unfitness for office; and that the only error committed by the Premicr, in the difficult and re-sponsible task of forming a govern-ment, was that of selecting two such individuals as he had appointed to those distinguished posts. He was also greatly comforted and supported, at this period of vexation and dis-ap-pointment, by the manly and indig-nant sympathy of—Mr Gammon, then having gained a prodigious ascendancy over the Earl; who, on the sudden death of his own solicitor, old Mr Pounce, adopted Gammon in his stead; and infinitely rejoiced his lordship was, to have thus secured the ser-vices of one who possessed an intel-lect at once so practical, masterly, and en-ergetic; who had formed so high an estimate of his lordship's powers; and whom his lordship's condescend-ing familiarity, never for one moment caused to lose sight of the vast dis-tance and difference between them. He appeared, moreover, to act between Titmouse and the Earl, with the scrupulous candour and fidelity of a high-minded person, consciously placed in a situation of peculiar delicacy and responsibility. He seemed exceed-ing-anxious to secure Lady Cecilia's inter-ests; and varied, or appeared to vary, the arrangements, according to every suggestion of his lordship. The Earl was satisfied that Gammon urged Titmouse to go much further than of his own accord he would have been disposed to go, towards meeting the Earl's wishes, all-important in the matter of the settle-ments;—in fact, Gammon evinced, in the astute Earl's opinion, great anxiety to place her ladyship in that position to which her high pretensions so justly entitled her.

But this was not the only mode by which he augmented and secured his influence over the weak old peer. Not only had Gammon, in the manner pointed out in a previous portion of this history, diminished the drain

upon his lordship's income, which had so long existed in the shape of inter-est upon money lent him on mort-gage, (and which embarrassments, by the way, bad all arisen from his fool-ish state and extravagance when Lord High Steward); not only, I say, had Gammon done all this, but infi-nitely more;—he had enabled his lordship, as it were, 'to strike a blow in a new hemisphere,' and at once evince his fitness for the conduct of important and complicated affairs of business, acquire an indefinite aug-mentation of fortune, and also great influ-ence and popularity.

England, about the time I am speaking of, was smitten with a sort of mercantile madness—which showed itself in the shape of a monstrous passion for JOINT-STOCK COMPANIES.* John Bull all of a sudden took it into his head, that no commercial under-taking of the least importance could any longer be carried on by means of individual energy, capital, and enter-prise. A glimmering of this great truth he discovered that he had had, from the first moment that a private partnership had been adopted; and it was only following out the principle, to convert a private into a public partnership, and call it a "Joint-stock Company." This bright idea of John's produced prompt and prodigious re-sults. A hundred joint-stock companies

"rose like an exhalation"

in the metropolis alone, within one twelvemonth's time. But then came the question, upon what were these grand combined forces to operate? Undertakings of commensurate mag-nitude must be projected; and they were. It really mattered not a straw how wild and ludicrously imprac-ticable was a project—it had but to be started, and announced, to call forth monied people among all classes, all hastening to be rich †—and ready to back the speculation, even to the last penny they had in the world; pouring out their capital with a recklessness, of

* See APPENDIX.

† *He that hasteth to be rich, hath an evil eye; and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him.*—Prov. xxviii. 22.

which the lamentable results alone could prevent the recurrence. Any volatile visionary who was unluckily able to reach the ear of one or two persons in the city, could expand his crotchet into a "company" with as little effort as an idiot could blow out a soap-bubble. For instance : one wiseacre, who surely ought never to have been at large, conceived a plan for creating ARTIFICIAL RAIN at an hour's notice, over any extent of country short of a circle of three miles in diameter ; a second, for conveying MILK to every house in the metropolis, in the same way as water is at present conveyed—viz. by pipes, supplied by an immense reservoir of milk to be established at Islington, and into which a million cows were to be milked night and morning ; a third, for converting saw-dust into solid wood ; and a fourth, for surrounding the metropolis with a wall twenty feet in thickness, and fifty in height. Within three days of each of these hopeful speculations being announced, there were as many completely organised joint-stock companies established to carry them into effect. Superb offices were engaged in the city ; Patrons, Presidents, Vice-Presidents ; Trustees, Chairmen, Directors ; Secretaries, Actuaries, Architects, Auditors ; Bankers, Standing Counsel, Engineers, Surveyors, and Solicitors, appointed : and the names of all these functionaries forthwith blazed in dazzling array at the head of a "Prospectus," which set forth the advantages of the undertaking with such seductive eloquence as no man could resist ; and within a week's time there was not a share to be had in the market. Into affairs of this description, Mr Gammon, who soon saw the profit to be made out of them, if skilfully worked, plunged with the energy and excitement of a gamester. He drew in Mr Quirk after him : and, as they could together command the ears of several enterprising Jewish capitalists in the city, they soon had their hands full of business, and launched two or three brilliant speculations. Mr Gammon himself drew up their

"Prospectuses," and in a style which must have tempted the devil himself, had he seen them, into venturing half his capital in the undertaking !—One was a scheme for providing the metropolis with a constant supply of salt water by means of a canal cut from the vicinity of the Nore, and carried nearly all round London, so as to afford the citizens throughout the year the luxury of sea-bathing. Another was of a still more extraordinary and interesting description—for carrying into effect a discovery, by means of which, ships of all kinds and sizes could be furnished with the means, by one and the same process—and that remarkably simple, cheap, and convenient—of obtaining pure fresh water from the SEA, and converting the salt or brine thrown off in the operation, instanter into gunpowder ! The reality of this amazing discovery was decisively ascertained by three of the greatest chemists in England ; a patent was taken out, and a company formed in a trice for working the patent. This superb undertaking was the first that Gammon brought under the notice of the Earl of Dredlington, whom he so completely dazzled by his description, of both the signal service to be conferred upon the country, and the princely revenue to be derived from it to those early entering into the speculation, that his lordship intimated rather an anxious wish to be connected with it.

"Good heavens, sir!" said his lordship, with an air of wonder—"to what a pitch is science advancing ! When will human ingenuity end ? Sir, I doubt not that one of these days everything will be found out ; and then what will become of man ?"

"What, indeed, my Lord !" replied Gammon, who had listened with an air of delighted deference, to the Earl's highly suggestive observation !

"Sir," continued the Earl, "this is a truly astonishing discovery ! Yet, I give you my honour, sir, I have often thought that something of the kind was desirable, as far as the obtaining fresh water, from salt water, was concerned, and have wondered

whether it could ever be practicable : but I protest the latter part of the discovery—the conversion of the brine into gunpowder—is—is—sir, I say it is—astounding ; it is more ; it is interesting, in a picturesque, and important in a patriotic point of view. Only think, sir, of our vessels gathering gunpowder and fresh water from the sea they are sailing over. Sir, the discoverer deserves a subsidy ! This must, in due time, be brought before parliament." His lordship got quite excited ; and Gammon, watching his opportunity, intimated the pride and pleasure it would give him to make his lordship the patron of the gigantic undertaking.

"Sir—sir—you do me—infinite honour," quoth the Earl, quite flustered by the suddenness of the proposal.

"As there will be, of course, your lordship sees, several great capitalists concerned, I must, for form's sake, consult them before any step is taken ; but I flatter myself, my lord, that there can be but one opinion, when I mention to them the possibility of our being honoured with your lordship's name and influence."

The Earl listened to this with a stately bow and a gratified smile ; and on the ensuing day received a formal communication from Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, soliciting his lordship to become the patron of the undertaking—which he graciously acceded to ; and was easily prevailed upon to secure several other highly distinguished names among his friends, who were profoundly ignorant of business, in all its departments, but delighted to figure before the public, as the patrons of so great and laudable an enterprise. Out went forthwith, all over the country, the advertisements and prospectuses of the new company, which exhibited such commanding names as cast most of its sister companies into the shade—*e. g.* "The Right Honourable the EARL OF DREDDLINGTON, G.C.B., F.C.S., F.P.S., &c. &c."—"The Most Noble the DUKE of TANTALLAN, K.T., &c. &c."—"The Most Honourable the MARQUESS of MARMALADE, &c. &c. &c." The capital was to be one million, in ten thousand

shares of one hundred pounds each. Lord Dreddlington was presented with a hundred shares as a mark of respect and gratitude from the leading shareholders ; moreover, his lordship took two hundred shares besides, and prevailed on various of his friends to do the same. In less than three weeks' time the shares had risen to £40 premium—[*i. e.* my lady readers will understand, each share for which his lordship was supposed to have given, or to be liable to be called upon for £100, he could at any moment dispose of for £140]—and then Mr Gammon so represented matters to his lordship, as to induce him to part with his shares, which he found no difficulty in doing—and thereby realised a clear profit of £12,000. This seemed to the Earl rather the effect of magic, than of an everyday mercantile adventure. His respect for Gammon rose with everything he heard of that gentleman, or saw him do ; and his lordship allowed himself to be implicitly guided by him in all things. Under his advice, accordingly, the Earl became interested in several other similar speculations, which so occupied his thoughts as almost to obliterate his sense of ministerial injustice. Several of his friends cautioned him, now and then, against committing himself to such novel and extensive speculations ; in which he might incur, he was reminded, dangerous liabilities : but his magnificent reception of such interference soon secured its discontinuance. The Earl felt himself safe in the hands of Mr Gammon, forming an equal, and a high, estimate of his ability and integrity. His lordship's attention having been thus accidentally directed to such matters, he soon began to take a vast interest in the discussion of fiscal subjects in the House, greatly to the surprise and edification of many of his somnolent brother peers.

Absorbing, however, as were these and similar occupations, they were almost altogether suspended, as soon as a day, and that not a distant one, had been fixed upon for the marriage of the Lady Cecilia, with Mr Titmouse. From that moment, the old man could

scarcely bear her out of his presence ; following and watching all her movements with a peculiar, though still a stately, solicitude and tenderness. Frequent, earnest, and dignified, were his interviews with Titmouse—his representations as to the invaluable treasure that was about to be intrusted to him, in the Lady Cecilia—the last direct representative of nearly the most ancient noble family in the kingdom. Innumerable were his lordship's directions to him concerning his future conduct, both in public and private life ; intimating, in a manner at once impressive and affectionate, that the eyes of the country would be thenceforward fixed upon him, as son-in-law of the Earl of Dredlington. His lordship, moreover—pocketing the affront he had received at the hands of the ministry, made a strenuous, and nearly a successful, effort to procure for his destined son-in-law, a vacant lordship of the Treasury. The Premier, though at first somewhat astounded, was really beginning to consider the subject, when Mr O'Gibbet extinguished all the aspiring hopes of poor Lord Dredlington, by applying for the vacant office for Mr Och Hubbahoo, an early friend of O'Gibbet ; and who, having failed in business as a drover, and been unable to re-establish himself, had come into the House of Commons to repair his shattered fortunes. I need hardly say, that within a day or two, Mr Hubbahoo was made a lord of the Treasury ; and thereby were nearly alienated from ministers two stanch and enlightened supporters—to wit, the Earl of Dredlington, and Mr Titmouse.

Early in the forenoon of Tuesday the 1st of April 18—, there were indications, in the neighbourhood of Lord Dredlington's house in Grosvenor Square, that an aristocratic wedding was about to be celebrated. Lady Cecilia's bridesmaids, and one or two other ladies, the Duke and Duchess of Tantalan, and a few other persons of distinction, who were to accompany the party to church, made their appearance about eleven o'clock ; and shortly afterwards dashed up Mr Titmouse's

cab, in which sate that gentleman, enveloped in a magnificent green cloak, designed to conceal from vulgar observation the full splendour of his personal appearance. He had been engaged at his toilet since five o'clock that morning ; and the results were not unworthy of the pains which had been taken to secure them. He wore a light-blue body coat, with velvet collar ; tight black pantaloons tying round his ankles ; gossamer white silk stockings, and dress shoes, with small gold buckles. His shirt was of snowy whiteness, and there glittered in the front thereof a superb diamond brooch. He had two waistcoats, the under one a sky-blue satin, only the roll visible, the outer one of white satin, richly embroidered. A burnished gold guard-chain was disposed gracefully over the exterior of his outer waistcoat. His hair was parted down the middle, and curled forward towards each temple, giving his countenance a bold and striking expression. He wore white kid gloves, a glossy new hat, and held in his hand his agate-headed ebony cane. Though he tried to look at his ease, his face was rather pale, and his manner a little flurried.

As for the aristocratic bride—she had slept scarcely a quarter of an hour the whole night ; and a glimpse at her countenance, in the glass, convinced her of the necessity of yielding to Annette's suggestions, and rouging a little. Her eyes were full of weariness and misery ; and while dressing, she was twice forced to drink a little sal volatile and water. She was cold, and trembled. When at length she had completed her toilet, what a figure did her glass present to her ! The dress—rich white satin—a long and beautiful blonde lace veil—and a delicate wreath of orange blossoms, was that of a bride certainly ; but was the haggard countenance that of a bride ? Miss Macspleuchan burst into tears at the sight. When, attended by her bridesmaids and Miss Macspleuchan, she made her appearance in the drawing-room, the Earl of Dredlington ap-

proached her, and saluted her with silent and tremulous tenderness. Then Titmouse came up, very pale, but with a woulde-be familiar air—"Hope you're quite well, dearest, this happy day," said he, and kissed her gloved hand, while his hideous little figure seemed lost in a momentary mist. She made him no reply; stept back, and sank upon the sofa; and presently the carriages were announced to be in readiness. The Earl led her down, followed by her two bridemaids, and entered the first carriage, which then drove off to St George's Church; Titmouse and the rest of the party immediately following. The ceremony was to be performed by the Bishop of Barnard Castle, an old friend, and indeed a distant relation of Lord Dredlington's. Methinks I now see his portly and commanding figure, standing at the altar, with the little distinguished party before him; and hear his clear, sonorous voice reading the marriage service. Titmouse, white and red by turns, looked frightened—behaving, however, with more sedateness than was to have been expected. Lady Cecilia leaned, when she could, against the rails; and repeated her few allotted words in a voice scarcely audible. When Titmouse fixed the ring upon her finger, she trembled and shed a scalding tear—averting her face from him, and at length concealing it entirely in her pocket-handkerchief. She looked, indeed, the image of wretchedness. The Earl of Dredlington maintained a countenance of rigid solemnity. At length the all-important ceremony came to a close; the necessary entries and signatures were made in the vestry, to which the wedding party followed the Bishop; and then Mr Titmouse, taking HIS WIFE's arm within his own, led her out to the private door, where stood waiting for them the Earl's chariot. Her husband handed her into it, and popped in after her—a little crowd standing round to catch a glimpse of the distinguished bride and bridegroom; and they drove rapidly homeward. He sat in one corner, and she in the other; each so

occupied with their own thoughts, that they uttered scarcely two words all the way.

A splendid *déjeuner à la fourchette* was prepared, and a brilliant party attended to pay their respects to the bride and bridegroom, and the Earl of Dredlington; and about two o'clock the Lady Cecilia withdrew to prepare for her journey, which was to Poppleton Hall, her father's residence in Hertfordshire, where they were to spend the honeymoon. She had never shown so much emotion in her life, as when she parted with Miss Macspleuchan and her bridemaids, being several times on the verge of hysterics. Mr Titmouse's travelling-chariot, a dashing chocolate-coloured one, with four horses, stood at the door, her ladyship's maid and his valet seated in the rumble. Some hundred people stood round to see the

"Happy, happy, happy pair,"

set off on their journey of bliss. The Earl led down Lady Cecilia, followed by Titmouse, who had exchanged his hat for a gaudy travelling-cap, with a gold band round it! Lady Cecilia, with drooping head and feeble step, suffered the Earl, whom she kissed, but with corpse-cold lips, to place her in the chariot, when she burst into a flood of tears. Then Mr Titmouse shook hands cordially with his distinguished father-in-law—popped into the chariot—the steps were doubled up—the door closed—the side-blinds were drawn down by Mr Titmouse; "All right!" cried one of the servants—crack, crack, went the whips of the postillions—and away rolled the carriage-and-four, which, quickening its speed, was soon out of sight. Lady Cecilia remained in a sort of stupor for some time, and sat silent and motionless in the corner of the chariot; but Titmouse had now become lively enough, having had the benefit of some dozen glasses of champagne.

"Ah, my lovely gal—dearest gal of my heart!" he exclaimed fondly, at the same time kissing her pallid cheeks, and putting his arm round her waist—"Now you're all my own!

'Pon my soul, isn't it funny, though ? We're man and wife ! By Jove, I never loved you so much as now, ducky, eh ?" Again he pressed his lips to her cold cheek.

"Don't, don't, I beg," said she, faintly ; "I am not well ;" and she feebly tried to disengage herself from his rude and boisterous embrace; while her drooping head and ashy cheek fully corroborated the truth of her statement. In this state she continued for the whole of the first stage. When they stopped to change horses, says Titmouse, starting up, having nearly dropped asleep, "Cicely, as you're so uncommon ill, hadn't you better have Annette in, and I'll sit on the box ?—it would be a devilish deal more comfortable for you—eh ?"

"Oh, I should feel so obliged if you would, Mr Titmouse !" she replied faintly. It was done as she wished. Titmouse enveloped himself in his cloak ; and, having lit a cigar, mounted the box, and smoked all the way till they reached the Hall !

Gammon was one of those who had seen them set off on their auspicious journey. He contemplated them with deep interest and anxiety.

"Well," he exclaimed, walking away, with a deep sigh, when the carriage had got out of sight—"So far, *so good* : Heavens ! the plot thickens, and the game is bold !"

—Were you, oh unhappy Lady Cecilia ! in entering into this ill-omened union, to be more pitied, or despised ? 'Twas, alas ! most deliberately done ; in fact, we have already had laid before us ample means of determining the question—but 'tis a delicate and painful one, and had perhaps be better left alone.

They spent about a fortnight at Poppleton Hall, and then went on to Yatton ; and if the reader be at all curious to know how MR AND LADY CECILIA TITMOUSE commenced their matrimonial career, I am able, in some measure, to gratify him, by the sight of a letter addressed by the Lady Cecilia, some time afterwards, to one of her confidential friends. 'Tis melancholy enough, with, in addition, all the

feebleness and dulness which might have been expected from one of her ladyship's temperament and capacity ; yet, methinks, may it suggest topics of instructive reflection.

"YATTON, 28th April, 18—.

"DEAR BLANCHE—

* * * "Fate should have something pleasant in store for me, since it has made me most unhappy now, but it is some consolation that I took this step purely to please my papa, who seemed to think that it was a thing that *ought* to be done. You know he always fretted himself greatly about the division of the family interests, and so on ; and when he proposed to me this truly unhappy alliance, I supposed it was my duty to comply, as indeed he said it was. I am sure but for this I should never have dreamed of such a thing as doing what I did, for if, by the way, fate chose us to come together, it ought surely to have fitted us to each other ; but really, dear Blanche (*entre nous*) you cannot *think* what a *creature* it is. He is always smoking cigars, &c., and he by that means not only carries the nasty odour of the smoke about him everywhere, but also in spite of all I can do, when we come together in the carriage (which is not often) and at meals, he communicates the odious smell to my clothes—and Annette wastes a fortune in eau-de-cologne to scatter over my dresses and her own too, and he has very nasty habits besides, namely, picking his teeth, (often at dinner), eating with his knife, &c. &c., and he is continually running his fingers through his horrid hair, to curl it, and carries a comb with him, and several times has combed his hair in the carriage just before we got out of the door of the place we were to dine at, and he always takes too much wine, and comes up the very last to the drawing-room, and sometimes in *such a state*. I am resolved I will never come home with him from dinner again, even if I ever go out together with him. I do believe the wretch has been guilty of some impudence to Annette, for the girl always colours when I mention his name, and

looks confused and angry, but of course I cannot ask her. And he is such a horrid *liar* there is no believing a word he says; he is always saying that he might if he had chosen marry Lady This and Lady That, and says Miss Aubrey was dying to have him (I wish, dear B., she *had*, instead of myself, she would have been welcome for me, to return and become mistress of Yatton again)—By the way, it certainly is a truly delightful spot, quite old-fashioned and all that, and delightful grounds about it, but it seems like a nunnery to me, I am so unhappy, and no one seems anxious to come to see me, though there are the ____'s, and the ____'s and ____'s, within an hour or two's drive of us; but how can you wonder? for if you only saw the sort of people that come here, such horrid wretches, a Unitarian parson and his vulgar wife and daughter, and a low apothecary and auctioneer and so on, which he says is necessary (forsooth) to keep up his interest in the borough. Then he goes on in such a shameful and unfeeling and disrespectful way before the vicar (Dr Tatham, a very nice person, who, I am sure, by his looks, *feels for me*) that Dr T. will scarcely ever come near us under one pretence or another. I am sorry to tell you Mr Titmouse has no more *sense of religion* than a cat or a dog, and I understand he has left a great many of his election bills unpaid (so that he is very unpopular) and, positively, dear Blanche! the diamond spray the creature bought me turns out to be only *paste!!* He never goes to church, and has got up one or two dog-fights in the village, and he is hated by the tenants for he is always raising their rents. I forgot to mention by the way he had the monstrous assurance one morning to *open my letters!*—and said he had a right to do so, with his own wife, for we were one (I hate to write it) so I have had a letter-bag of my own which is always delivered in to my own room. Oh Heavens! the idea of his succeeding to the barony! but to be sure you have no notion how hard he lives; and (*entre nous*) the

other day the doctor was called in to him and had to put leeches on his head, and certainly (*entre nous*) dearest B., I understand such things sometimes do often lead to very *sad results*, but however he certainly does seem better now. My papa knows nothing of all this yet, but he soon must, and I am confident a *separation* must ensue, or I shall die, or go mad. Oh how thankful I should be! * * * But I could fill two or three sheets more in this way, and yet I have not told you a hundredth part of his *gauchoeries*, but really you must be quite sick of hearing of them. If he will but leave me here when he goes up to town, you will surely pay me your promised visit—and I will tell you many more miserable things. In the meanwhile, oh dearest B., how I envy you being single, and wish I were so again!—Be sure you burn this when you have read it—and believe me, your unhappy,

CECILIA.

"P.S.—Of course I shall not ask him for one of his ridiculous franks, I never do; and as your brother is not with you, you must not grumble at paying the postage of this long letter.

"THE LADY BLANCHE LEWISHAM."

A dull and phlegmatic disposition, like that of Lady Cecilia, must have been roused and stung indeed, before she could have attained to such bitterness of expression as is occasionally to be met with in the above communication. Though it shadows forth, with painful distinctness, several of the more disadvantageous features of Mr Titmouse's character and conduct, there were far darker ones, with which its miserable writer had not then become acquainted. I shall but hastily glance at one of them—viz. that he was at that moment keeping a mistress in town, and commencing the seduction of a farmer's daughter in the neighbourhood of Yatton! Execrable little miscreant!—why should I defile my paper by further specifying his gross misdeeds, or dwelling upon their sickening effects on the mind and feelings of the weak woman, who could suffer herself to be betrayed into

such a monstrous union?—But is she the only one that has done so?

—Whatever may be the accidental and ultimate advantages, in respect of fortune or social station, expected to be realised by a woman, in forming a union with one who would be otherwise regarded with indifference, dislike, or disgust, she may rely upon it that she is committing an act of deliberate wickedness, which will be attended, probably, for the rest of her life, with consequences of unutterable and inevitable misery, which even the obtaining her proposed objects will not compensate, but only enhance. It is equally a principle of our law, and of common sense, that people must be understood to have contemplated the natural and necessary consequences of their own acts, even if hastily—but by so much the more, if deliberately done. When, therefore, they come to experience those consequences, let them not complain.

A marriage of this description is, so to speak, the dislocation and subversion of the delicate and beautiful fabric of a woman's character. It perverts, it deflects the noblest tendencies of her lovely nature; it utterly degrades and corrupts her; she sinks irretrievably into an inferior being: instead of her native simplicity and purity, are to be seen thenceforth only heartlessness and hypocrisy. Her affections and passions, denied their legitimate objects and outlets, according to their original weakness or strength of development, either disappear and wither, and she is no longer WOMAN, or impel her headlong into coarse sensuality, perhaps at length open criminality; and then she is expelled indignantly, and for ever, from communion with her sex. 'Tis then, indeed, an angel turned into a FRIEND!

Remember, remember, oh woman! that it is not the mere ring, and the orange blossom, which constitute the difference between VIRTUE—and VICE!—

Had Lady Cecilia been a woman of acute perceptions or lively sensibilities, she must have fled from her sufferings—she must have gone mad, or

committed suicide. As it was, dull as was her temperament, when the more odious points of Titmouse's character and habits were forced upon her notice by the close and constant contiguity of daily intercourse, the reflection that such must be the case *for the remainder of their lives*, became hourly more intolerable, and roused into existence feelings of active hatred and disgust; she became every moment more alive to the real horrors of her position. The slender stay she had sought for in the reflection that she had yielded to her fate—that she had incurred all by a dutiful submission to her father's wishes, quickly gave way; *she knew that it was false!*

As for Titmouse, he had never cared one straw about anything beyond becoming the husband of the future Baroness of Drelincourt—and that, on account not merely of the dignity and splendour conferred upon him by such an alliance with the last remaining member of the elder branch of his ancient family, but also because of the grave and repeated assurances of Mr Gammon, that it was in some mysterious way essential to the tenure of his own position. Had, however, Lady Cecilia, instead of being cold and inanimate, haughty even to repulsion in her manner, and of person lean and uninviting—been of fascinating manners, affectionate disposition, of brilliant accomplishments, and ripe loveliness of person—nay, Kate Aubrey herself—it would, I am persuaded, have made little or no difference to Mr Titmouse; since such a radiant being would, as it were, stand always surrounded by the invisible but impassable barrier of *refinement*—for ever forbidding communion and sympathy. As for Lady Cecilia, Titmouse could scarcely avoid perceiving how she despised him, and shunned his company on every possible occasion. No person, from merely seeing them, could have dreamed of their being husband and wife. He made no secret at all, in his own peculiar visiting circles, of his wishes that the Earl's increasing age and infirmities might quicken! and Lady Cecilia's ap-

parently delicate health decline apace! —and thus accelerate the accession of Mr Titmouse to the barony of Drelincourt.

"Ha, ha!" would exclaim his choice boon companions, "won't it be comical, Tit, to see you take your seat in the Upper House?"

"Pon my soul, jolly, ah, ah!—Demme, I'll show the old stagers a funny trick or two!"

"Capital!—ah, ah, ha!—Do the donkey? eh?—You'd make the Chancellor's wig jump off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!—I'll tickle 'em, or my name isn't Tittlebat Titmouse!"—By all which was meant, that he purposed introducing into the House of Lords that peculiar mode of debating, which had earned him such quick distinction in the House of Commons!

CHAPTER VIII.

A DEADLY STRUGGLE BETWEEN A SNAKE AND AN APE.

AFTER the bride and bridegroom had spent about a month at Yatton, his urgent parliamentary duties required the former, as he conceived, to tear himself from that lovely seclusion—that "bower of bliss"—and resume his arduous post in the House. Though Lady Cecilia would have vastly preferred being left behind at Yatton, decency seemed to require that she and her husband should make their re-appearance in the world jointly. She was therefore compelled to accompany him to town; and they were soon duly established in his new residence in Park Lane. It was spacious and elegant—furnished, indeed, with great splendour, inasmuch as *carte blanche* had been given to a fashionable upholsterer. In a moment, the happy pair were both in the great whirling world of fashion. Lord Dredlington gave a series of dinner-parties on their account, as did several of their distinguished kinsfolk and friends; and in due time their hospitalities were returned by Mr Titmouse. His first dinner party went off with great *éclat*, no fewer than four peers of the realm, with their ladies, being among his guests. Little Mr Titmouse led down to dinner the gigantic

Duchess of Tantallan, blazing in diamonds, his Grace the Duke bringing up the rear with the Lady Cecilia—and the splendid affair was duly announced, the ensuing morning, in the obsequious columns of the *Aurora*.

For some little time Mr Titmouse occupied his novel and dazzling position with an approach towards decorum and self-denial; but, as he became familiar with it, his old tastes revived—and Lady Cecilia and her friends were gratified, for instance, while in the drawing-room after dinner, by catching occasional sounds of Mr Titmouse's celebrated imitations of animals, which, once or twice, when considerably elevated, he insisted upon giving in the drawing-room! Indeed, he spared no pains to acquire the power of pleasing society, by the display of his rare accomplishments: for which purpose he took lessons every other day in the *art diabolique*—i. e. in conjuring; in which he soon became an expert proficient, and could play marvellous tricks upon cards, and with dice; eat pocket-handkerchiefs; cause wine-glasses visibly to sink through solid tables; and perform sundry other astounding feats. Nor was he long in collecting round

him guests, who not only tolerated, but professed infinite delight in, such entertainments—"fit audience, *nor few*"—consisting principally of those adventurous gentlemen who had entered Parliament, with a devout reliance on Providence to find them dinners. 'Twas only in such society as this that Titmouse could feel the least sense of enjoyment, and from which Lady Cecilia altogether absented herself, often without deigning the slightest reason, excuse, or apology. In fact, the intemperate habits and irregular hours of Titmouse, soon rendered it necessary that he and the Lady Cecilia should occupy separate sleeping apartments; for either his club, the House, or his other engagements, kept him out till a late, or rather early hour every morning.

It was about half-past eleven o'clock, one day towards the latter end of June, that Mr Titmouse, having finished breakfast—an early hour for him, since he had not gone to bed till four o'clock that morning—a meal to which he invariably sat down alone, often not catching a glimpse of Lady Cecilia during the day, except on a chance encounter in the hall, or on the stairs, or when they were forced to go out to dinner together—had entered his library, to enjoy undisturbed the luxury of his hookah. The apartment was spacious and elegant. All the sides of it were occupied by curious antique carved oak bookcases, which had belonged to the former tasteful occupant of the house, and from whom they had been purchased by Titmouse, who then bethought himself of procuring books to fill them. For this purpose, it luckily occurred to him, on seeing an advertisement of a library for sale by auction one day, that it would be a good speculation to be beforehand with the expected audience, and purchase the aforesaid library in a lump by private contract. He did so—and at a remarkably low price: giving directions that they should forthwith be carried to a bookbinder, named by the obsequious auctioneer—with orders to bind all in elegant, but

as varied, bindings as possible. Certainly the works were of a somewhat miscellaneous character;—old Directories; Poems by Young Ladies and Gentlemen; Ready-Reckoners; Doddridge's Expositor; Hints on Etiquette; two hundred Minerva press novels; triplicate copies of some twenty books on cookery; the art of war; charades; Cudworth's Intellectual System; books of travels; bibles, dictionaries, prayer-books, plays; Treatises on Political Economy, and Dancing; adventures of noted highwaymen; the classics; moral essays; Enfield's Speaker; and Burn's Ecclesiastical Law. If these respectable works had had the least sense of the distinction so unexpectedly conferred upon them, they ought not to have murmured at never afterwards receiving the slightest personal attention from their tasteful and gifted proprietor!—The room was lit by a large bow-window, which, being partially open, admitted the pleasant breeze stirring without; while the vivid light was mitigated by half-drawn blinds, and ample chintz window-drapery. On the mantelpiece stood one or two small alabaster statues and vases, and an elaborately ornamented French timepiece. The only unpleasantness perceptible, was the sort of disagreeable odour prevalent in rooms devoted, as in the present instance, to smoking. To this apartment had been also transferred many of the articles which I have described as having been visible in his rooms at the Albany. Over the mantelpiece was placed the picture of the boxers—that of Mr Titmouse being similarly situated in the dining-room.

On the present occasion, he wore a full crimson dressing-gown, with yellow slippers; his shirt-collar was open, and thrown down over his shoulders—leaving exposed to view a quantity of sand-coloured hair under his throat. In fact, he looked the image of some impudent scamp of a valet, who has, in his master's absence, chosen to dress himself in that master's clothes, and affect his luxurious airs. He lay

on the sofa with his hookah in his left hand ; near him was the table, on which stood the *Morning Growl*, and some eight or ten letters, only one or two of which had as yet been opened. He had just leaned back his head, and with an air of tranquil enjoyment slowly expelled a mouthful of smoke, when a servant submissively entered, and announced the arrival of a visitor

—Mr Gammon.

"How d'y do, Gammon !—Early, eh ?" commenced Titmouse, without stirring, and with infinite nonchalance. Mr Gammon made the usual reply, and presently sate down in the chair placed for him by the servant, nearly opposite to Mr Titmouse—who, had he been accustomed to observation, or capable of it, might have detected something rather unusual in the flushed face, the anxious and restless eye, and the *forced* manner of his visitor.

"Likely to be devilish hot day—'pon my soul!"—exclaimed Titmouse, after again emptying his mouth—adding in a tolerably conceited manner—"By the way—here's a letter from Snap—just opened it !—Rather cool, after what's passed—eh ? Dem him, asks me for a place under government ; —Ah—a—what's he fit for ?"

"For what he *is*, and nothing else," replied Gammon with a bitter smile, glancing over poor Snap's letter, which Titmouse handed to him, though marked "strictly confidential"—Gammon being undoubtedly the last man upon earth whom Snap would have wished to know of his application.

"Were you at the House last night ?" inquired Gammon—"They sat very late ! Lord Bulfinch made, I think, a powerful speech"—

"Yes—devilish good — rather long though ; and too many of those cursed *figures* that—by Jove—no one cares about !" replied Titmouse languidly.

He had by this time turned himself towards Mr Gammon ;—his right arm and leg hanging carelessly over the further side of the sofa.

"Lady Cecilia is well, I hope ?"

"Can't say—not seen her this week," drawled Titmouse. "I'll ring

and ask, if you wish," he added, with an affected smile.

"Ah, my dear Titmouse," quoth Gammon blandly, and with a smile of delicious flattery, "I hope you don't give her ladyship just cause for jealousy ?—eh ? You must not avail yourself of your—your acknowledged power over the sex—ahem !"

Mr Titmouse silently expelled a mouthful of smoke, while an ineffable smile stole over his features.

"You must not neglect her ladyship, Titmouse," quoth Gammon, gently shaking his head, and with an anxiously deferential air.

"Pon my life, I don't neglect her !—Public life, you know—eh ?" replied Titmouse slowly, half-closing his eyes, and speaking with the air of one suffering from *ennui*. Here a pause of some moments ensued.

"Can we have about half an hour to ourselves, uninterruptedly ?" at length inquired Mr Gammon.

"Ah—a—why—my singing-master is coming here a little after twelve," quoth Titmouse, turning himself round, so as to be able to look at the clock on the mantelpiece.

"Oh, probably less than that period will suffice, if we shall not be interrupted—may I ring the bell, and will you give orders to that effect ?" With this, Gammon rang the bell ; and on the servant's appearing :

"I say, sir—do you hear, demme ?" said Titmouse, "not at home—till this gentleman's gone." The man bowed, and withdrew ; and on his closing the door, Gammon softly stepped after him and bolted it ; by which time Titmouse, somewhat startled, withdrew his hookah, for an instant, from his mouth, and gazed rather anxiously at Gammon, about whose appearance he then, for the first time, fancied he saw something unusual.

"Aha !—My stars, Mr Gammon, we're going to be *devilish* secret—aren't we !" exclaimed Titmouse with a faint smile, having watched Mr Gammon's movement with great surprise ; and he began to smoke rather more energetically than before, with

his eye fixed on the grave countenance of his companion.

"My dear Titmouse," he commenced, drawing his chair near to him, and speaking in an earnest but kindly manner, "does it never astonish you, when you reflect on the stroke of fortune which has elevated you to your present point of splendour and distinction?"

"O, yes—amazing!—uncommon!" replied Titmouse apprehensively.

"It is!—marvellous! unprecedented! You are the envy of hundreds upon hundreds of thousands! Such an affair as yours, does not happen above once or twice, in a couple of centuries—if so often! You cannot imagine the feelings of delight with which I regard all this—this brilliant result of my long labours, and untiring devotion to your service."—He paused.

"Oh, 'pon my life, yes; it's all very true," replied Titmouse with a little trepidation, replenishing the bowl of his hookah with tobacco.

"May I venture to hope, my dear Titmouse, that I have established my claim to be considered, in some measure, as the sole architect of your extraordinary fortunes—your earliest—your most constant friend?"

"You see, as I've often said, Mr Gammon—I'm most uncommon obliged to you for all favours—so help me ____! and no mistake," said Titmouse, exhibiting a countenance of increasing seriousness; and he rose from his recumbent posture, and, still smoking, sat with his face turned full towards Mr Gammon, who resumed—

"As I am not in the habit, my dear Titmouse, of beating about the bush, let me express a hope that you consider the services I have rendered you not unworthy of requital"—

"Oh yes—to be sure—certainly," quoth Titmouse, slightly changing colour—"anything, by Jove, that's in my power—but, it is most particular unfortunate that—ahem!—so deuced hard up just now—but—ah, 'pon my soul, I'll speak to Lord Bulfinch, or some of those people, and get you something—though I sha'n't do anything of the kind for *Snap*—dem him!

You've no idea," continued Titmouse anxiously, "how devilish thick Lord Bulfinch and I are—he shakes hands with me when we meet alone in the lobby—he does, 'pon my life."

"I am obliged, my dear Titmouse, for your kind offer—but I have a little political influence myself, when I think fit to exert it," replied Gammon gravely.

"Well, then," interrupted Titmouse eagerly, and somewhat angrily—"as for money, if that's what—by jingo! but if you don't know how precious hard up one is just now"—

"My dear sir," replied Gammon, his countenance sensibly darkening as he went on, "the subject on which we are now engaged, is one of inexpressible interest and importance, in my opinion, to each of us; and let us discuss it calmly. I have long waited for this opportunity; and am prepared to make a communication to you immediately, which you will never forget to the day of your death. Are you prepared to receive it?"

"Oh yes!—Never so wide awake in my life! O Lord! fire away!"—replied Titmouse; and taking the tip of his hookah from his lips, and holding it in the fingers of his left hand he leaned forward, staring open-mouthed at Gammon.

"Well, my dear Titmouse, then I will proceed. I will not enjoin you to secrecy;—and that not merely because I have full confidence in your honour—but because you cannot disclose it, as you will yourself see, to any mortal man, but at the peril of immediate and utter ruin."

"Pon my soul, most amazing! Demme, Mr Gammon, you frighten me out of my wits!" said Titmouse, turning paler and paler, as his recollection became more and more distinct of certain mysterious hints of Mr Gammon's, many months before, at Yatton, as to his power over Titmouse. He would have ordered in some brandy-and-water to support his spirits, but was afraid of appearing afraid.

"Consider for a moment. You are now a member of parliament; the unquestioned owner of a fine estate; the

husband of a lady of very high rank—the last direct representative of one of the proudest and most ancient of the noble families of Great Britain; you yourself are next but one in succession to almost the oldest barony in the kingdom; in fact, in all human probability, you are the next *LORD DRELINCOURT*; and all this through *ME*." He paused.

"Well—excuse me, Mr Gammon—but I hear;—though—ahem! meaning no offence—I can't for the life and soul of me, tell what the devil it is you're driving at"—said Titmouse, twisting his finger into his hair, and gazing at Gammon with intense anxiety. For some moments Mr Gammon remained looking solemnly and in silence at Titmouse; and then proceeded.

"Yet—and listen calmly while I say it—you are *really* no more entitled to be what you seem—what you are thought—or to possess what you at present possess—than—the little wretch that last swept your chimneys here!"

The hookah dropped out of Titmouse's hand upon the floor, and he made no effort to pick it up, but sat staring at Gammon, with cheeks almost as white as his shirt-collar, and in blank dismay.

"I perceive that you are agitated, Mr Titmouse," said Gammon, with an impressive kindness of manner.

"By Jove—I should think so!" replied Titmouse faintly; but he tried to assume an incredulous smile. "You a'n't joking, Mr Gammon, eh?"

"God forbid, Mr Titmouse!"

"Well—but," faltered Titmouse, "why a'n't I entitled to it all? Hasn't the law given it to me? And can't the law do as it likes, and keep it mine? Ah, it's no use telling me!"

"No one on earth knows at present the *what* and the *why* of this matter but myself; and, if you choose, no one ever shall; nay, I will take care, if you come this morning to my terms, to deprive even myself of all means of proving what I can *now* prove, at any moment I choose!"

"Lord, Mr Gammon!" ejaculated

Titmouse, passing his hand hastily over his damp forehead—his agitation visibly increasing. "What's to be the figure?" he asked, evidently dreading to hear the answer.

"If you mean, what are my *terms*—I will at once tell you:—they are terms on which I shall peremptorily insist; they have been long fixed in my own mind; I am quite inflexible; so help me Heaven, I will not vary from them a hair's-breadth!" He paused for a moment, and then proceeded deliberately, and with restrained energy—"I require first, to sit in parliament, for Yatton, at the next election; afterwards, alternately with yourself. Secondly, that you immediately grant me an annuity, for my life, of two thousand pounds a-year on your"

Titmouse sprang from the sofa, dashing his fist on the table, and uttering a frightful imprecation. He stood for a moment, and then threw himself desperately at full length on the sofa, repeating the expression which had first issued from his lips. Gammon, however, moved not a muscle, but fixed a steadfast eye on Titmouse. The two might have been compared to the affrighted rabbit, and the deadly boa-constrictor.

"It's all a swindle!—a d——d swindle!" at length he exclaimed, starting up into a sitting posture, and almost grinning defiance at Gammon. "You're a swindler!"—he exclaimed vehemently.

"Possibly—but you, sir, are a *bastard*"—replied Gammon calmly. Titmouse looked the picture of horror, and trembled in every limb.

"It's a lie!—It's all a lie! You're a liar, Mr Gammon!"—he gasped.

"Sir, you are simply a *bastard*"—repeated Gammon bitterly, and extending his forefinger threateningly towards Titmouse. Then he added with sudden vehemence—"Wretched miscreant—and do you presume to tell me I lie? You base-born cur!"—a lightning glance shot from his eye; but he restrained himself. Titmouse sat at length as if petrified; while Gammon, in a low tone, and with dreadful bitterness of manner, pro-

ceeded—" *You* the owner of Yatton? *You* the next Lord Drelincourt? No more than the helper in your stables! One breath of mine blights you forever—as an impostor—a mere audacious swindler—to be spit upon! to be kicked out of society—perhaps to be transported for life. Gracious Heavens! what will the Earl of Dredlington say when he hears that his sole daughter and heiress is married to a _____. It will kill him, or he will kill you!"

" Two can play at that," whispered Titmouse faintly—indeed almost inarticulately. There was nearly a minute's pause.

" No—but is it all true?—honour?" inquired Titmouse tremulously.

" As Heaven is my witness!" replied Gammon.

" Well," exclaimed Titmouse, after a prodigious sigh, " then at any rate, you're in for it with me; you said just now you'd done it all. Aha! I recollect, Mr Gammon! I should no more have thought of it myself—Lord! than—what d'ye say to that, Mr Gainmon?"

" Alas, sir! it will not avail you," replied Gammon with a fearful smile; " for I never made the dreadful discovery of your illegitimacy till it was too late—till at least two months after I had put you, whom I firmly believed the true heir, into possession of Yatton!"

" Ah—I don't know, though!—But—why didn't you tell Lord Dredlington? Why did you let me marry Lady Cicely? By Jove, but it's *you* he'll kill," quoth Titmouse eagerly.

" Yes!—Alas! I ought to have done so," replied Mr Gammon with a profound sigh—adding, abstractedly, " It may not be too late to make his lordship *some* amends. I may save his title from degradation. Lord Drelincourt's coronet to adorn the brow of a base-born—"

" O Lord!" ejaculated Titmouse involuntarily, and almost unconsciously, staring stupidly at Gammon, who continued, with a renewed sigh—" Yes, I ought to have told his lordship—but I own—I was led away by feelings of

pity—of affection for you—and, alas! is this the return?" He spoke this with a look, and in a tone, of sorrowful reproach.

" Well!" exclaimed Titmouse, in a pitiful tone,—" you shouldn't have come down on one so suddenly—all at once—how can a man—eh? Such horrid news!"

" It has cost me, sir, infinitely greater pain to tell you, than you to hear it, unhappy man!"

" By the living Jove!" exclaimed Titmouse, starting up with a sort of recklessness, and standing with his arms akimbo—" it can't be true! It's all a dream! I—I a'n't—I can't be a bas— perhaps *you're* all this while the true heir, Mr Gammon?" he added briskly, and snapped his fingers at his companion, desperately.

" No, sir, I am not," replied Gammon calmly; " but let me tell you, *I know where he is to be found*, Mr Titmouse! Do you commission me to go in search of him?" he inquired, suddenly fixing his bright serpentine eye upon Titmouse, who instantly stammered out—" O Lord! By Jove! no, no!"

" You have only to say the word, sir"—said Mr Gammon, sternly.

" You shouldn't have let me spend such a lot of money, if it wasn't mine all the while"—

" The estate was, in a manner, Mr Titmouse, in my gift; and in pitching upon you, sir, out of several, I imagined that I had chosen a gentleman! A man grateful and honourable"—

" Pon my solemn soul, so I am!" interrupted Titmouse anxiously.

" I had but to scrawl a line or two with my pen, the first day that I saw you at the shop of Mr Tag-rag—and there, sir—or in some similar hole—you would have been at this moment!" replied Gammon with a sudden sternness which quite overawed Titmouse; totally losing sight, however, of the somewhat different account of the matter which he had given Titmouse five minutes before; but even the best and most experienced liars have short memories. Here

it was, however, *Liar v. Fool*; and the latter did not perceive the slip made by his adversary—who suddenly became aware of his little inconsistency, and coloured.

"You'll excuse me, sir," quoth Titmouse presently; and with an air becoming momentarily more timid and doubtful—"but will you, if all this isn't a bottle of smoke, tell me how you can prove it all? Because, you know, it isn't only *saying* the thing that will do—you know, Mr Gammon?"

"Certainly—certainly! You are quite right, Mr Titmouse! Nothing can be more reasonable! Your curiosity shall be gratified. Aware that your natural acuteness, my dear sir, would in all probability prompt you to make the observation which you have now made, I have provided myself with the two principal documents, and you shall see them; though I doubt whether you will at first sight understand them, or appreciate their importance; but, if you desire it, I will fully explain them to you."

With this he produced his pocket-book, and took out carefully two small pieces of paper, folded up; which, after a brief preliminary explanation, causing Titmouse to tremble from head to foot, and no longer disbelieve the representations of Gammon, he unfolded and read—Titmouse looking affrightedly over his shoulder.

"Do I know the handwriting?" he inquired faintly.

"Probably not," replied Gammon.

"It's a devilish queer sort of writing, and precious little of it"—

"It is, and when you consider"—

"Are both in the same handwriting?" inquired Titmouse, taking them into his tremulous hand; while Gammon observed that his countenance indicated the despair which had taken possession of him.

"That cursed curtain is so much in the light," said Titmouse, looking up; and going towards it, as if to draw it aside, he started suddenly away from Gammon, and with frenzied gestures tore the little papers into pieces, with inconceivable rapidity! and flung

them out of the window, where a brisk breeze instantly took them up, and scattered them abroad, the glistening fragments!—never to be again reunited!

Having performed this astounding feat, he instantly turned round, and leaning his back against the window, gazed at Gammon with a desperate air of mingled apprehension and triumph, but spoke not a word. Nor did Gammon; but—oh the dreadful look with which he regarded Titmouse, while slowly approaching towards him! who, stepping aside, as Gammon advanced, reached the cabinet, and with desperate rapidity threw open the door, and, as if the devil had been waiting his bidding, in a moment turned round upon Gammon with a pistol.

"So help me God, I'll fire!" gasped Titmouse, cocking and presenting it—"I will—I WILL.—One!—Two!—For God's sake! be off!—It's loaded, and no mistake!—If I say Th—I'll fire, if I'm hanged for it!"

"Booby! You may put your pistol down, sir!" said Gammon calmly and resolutely, an indescribable smile passing over his whitened features.

"Demme!—distance!—Keep your distance!" cried Titmouse, his voice quivering with agitation.

"Ridiculous simpleton!—You poor rogue!" said Gammon, with a smile in which his companion saw MURDER glancing at him, and kept his deadly weapon pointed full at Gammon's breast, but his hand trembled violently. 'Twas wonderful that some chance motion of the shaking finger of Titmouse, did not send a bullet through Mr Gammon's heart. That gentleman stood, for a minute or two, gazing steadfastly, and without moving, at Titmouse; and then shrugging his shoulders, with a bitter but very forced smile, returned to his chair, and resumed his seat. Titmouse, however, refused to follow his example.

"So help me the Heaven that is above us, sir! I will not hurt a hair of your head," said Gammon earnestly.

Still Titmouse remained at the window, pistol in hand.

"Why should I hurt you? What have you *now* to fear, you little idiot!" inquired Gammon impatiently. "Do you, then, really think you have injured me by what you did a few moments ago? Do you positively think me so great a fool, my little friend!—as to have trusted you with the precious originals, of which those were only the copies?—The originals, believe me, Mr Titmouse! are far away, and safe enough under lock and key!"

"I—I—I don't believe you," gasped Titmouse, dropping the hand that held the pistol, and speaking in a truly dismal tone.

"That does not signify, my excellent little rogue," said Gammon, "if the *fact* be as I say. That you are a fool, you must by this time even yourself begin to suspect; and you surely cannot doubt that you are also something like an arrant villain, after what has just taken place? Eh? 'Twas a bright idea truly—well conceived and boldly executed. I give you all the credit for it; and it is only your misfortune that it was not successful. So let us now return to business. Uncock your pistol—replace it in your cabinet, and resume your seat; or in one minute's time I leave you, and go direct to Lord Dreddlington; and if so, you had better use that pistol in blowing out your *own* brains—if you have any!—Alas, what a loss to the high circles in which, by my permission, you at present move!"

Titmouse, after a moment or two's pause of irresolution, passively obeyed—on the point of absolutely crying aloud, with disappointment and impotent rage; and he and Gammon were presently again sitting opposite to one another.

Gammon was cold and collected—yet must it not have cost him a prodigious effort? Though he had told Titmouse that they were copies only which he had destroyed, they were nevertheless, the **ORIGINALS**, which, with such an incredible indiscretion, he had trusted into the hands of Titmouse; ay—they were the **ORIGINALS**

which Titmouse had just scattered to the winds; and who, in so doing, had suddenly, but unknowingly, broken to pieces the wand of the enchanter who had long exercised over him so mysterious and despotic an authority!

How comes it, that we not unfrequently find men of the profoundest craft, just at the crisis of their fortunes, thus unexpectedly, irretrievably and incredibly committing themselves? In the present instance, the only satisfactory way of accounting, on ordinary principles, for Mr Gammon's astounding indiscretion, would seem to be by referring it to a sense of security engendered by his utter contempt for Titmouse. But, for my part, I think this not a complete, nor even a true solution of the difficulty. 'Tis a sort of infatuation, unconsciously inspired by devilry. Satan often makes a sorry return for the devotion of his best servants, alluring them to the edge of the precipice—and then suddenly pushing them over. But he had to deal with a slippery soul in Mr Gammon.

"Are you *now* satisfied, Mr Titmouse, that you are completely at my mercy, and at the same time totally undeserving of it?" said Gammon, speaking in a low and earnest tone, and with much of his former kindness of manner. To an observant eye, however, what was at that moment the real expression in that of Gammon? Soothing and gentle as was his voice, he felt as if he could instantly have destroyed the audacious little miscreant before him. But he proceeded with truly admirable self-command—"Do not, my dear Titmouse, madly make me your enemy, your enemy for life; but rather your friend—your watchful and powerful friend and protector, whose every interest is identified with your own. Remember all that I have done and sacrificed for you! How I have racked my brain for you day and night—always relying upon your ultimate gratitude! Oh, the endless scheming I have had to practise, to conceal your fatal secret—and of which you shall ere long know more! During

these last two years have I not ruinously neglected my own interests, to look after yours?"

Gammon paused, and abruptly added—"I have but to lift my finger, and this splendid dressing-gown of yours, poor Titmouse, is exchanged for a prison-jacket"—

"Oh Lord! oh Lord!" suddenly exclaimed Titmouse with a shudder—"I wish I were dead and forgotten! What shall I do? 'Pon my soul"—he struck his forehead with some violence—"I'm going mad"—

"Consider, Mr Titmouse, calmly, how reasonable and moderate is my application"—proceeded Gammon; who now and then, however, experienced changes of colour, on the sudden recurrence of a sense of his last misfortune.

"Here's Lady Cicely to have £3000 a-year," passionately interposed Titmouse.

"Not till after your death, my dear sir"—

"Then she shall have it directly; for curse me if I don't kill myself!"—

"Then she would never have a farthing—for I should instantly produce the real heir"—

"Yah!" exclaimed Titmouse, uttering a sound like the sharp, furious bark of a cur, foiled at all points. He threw himself on the sofa, and folded his arms on his breast, compressing them as it were with convulsive vehemence.

"Do not excite yourself, Mr Titmouse—you are still one of the most fortunate men upon earth, to have fallen into hands like mine, I can assure you! You may enjoy a truly splendid income—little short of nine thousand a-year—for I will undertake to raise the Yatton rental, within a few months, to twelve or thirteen thousand a-year, as I have often told you. I have explained to you over and over again, how absurdly under their value they were let in the time of"—

"And you've perhaps forgotten that I've borrowed nearly fifty thousand pounds—that costs nothing, I suppose!"

"Well, certainly, you must be a little careful for a year or two, that's all"—

"Demme, sir!—I must give up my *yacht*!" exclaimed Titmouse, desperately snapping his thumb and finger vehemently at Gammon.

"Yes—or Yatton," replied Gammon contemptuously. "After all—what more shall I be, than a sort of steward of yours?"

"I don't want one," interrupted Titmouse; and, starting from the sofa, walked to the window, where he stood with his back turned towards Gammon, and crying! Gammon eyed him for several minutes in silence; and then slowly approaching him, tapped him briskly on the shoulder. Titmouse started. "Come, sir—you have now, I hope, relieved your small feelings, and must attend to me—and be prompt, too, sir! The time for trifling, and playing the baby, or the girl, is gone. Hark you, sir!—yield me my terms, or this very day I spring a mine under your feet, you little idiot and villain! that shall blow you into ten thousand atoms, and scatter them wider than ever you scattered just now those bits of worthless paper! Do you hear that?" As he said this, he took hold of the collar of Titmouse's dressing-gown, which he felt to be grasped by a hand, tightening momentarily. He made no reply; but gazed at Gammon with a countenance full of distress and terror.

"Pause," continued Gammon, in a low vehement tone and manner, "and you are lost—stripped of this gandy dress—turned out of this splendid house into the streets or a prison!—If I quit this room—and I will not wait much longer—without your plain and written consent to my terms, I shall go direct to my Lord Dredlington, and tell him the obscure and base-born impostor that has crept"—

"Oh, Mr Gammon—Mr Gammon! have mercy on me!" exclaimed Titmouse, shaking like an aspen-leaf—at length realising the terrible extent of danger impending over him.

"Have mercy on yourself!" rejoined Mr Gammon vehemently.

"I will!—I'll do all you ask—I will, so help me——!"

"I'm glad to hear it!" said Gammon, relaxing his hold of Titmouse; and, in a voice of returning kindness, adding—"Oh, Titmouse, Titmouse! how fearful would be the scene—when your noble father-in-law—alas! you must have quitted the country! His lordship would have instantly divorced you from the Lady Cecilia!"

"You can't think how I love Lady Cicely!" exclaimed Titmouse, in a broken voice.

"Ay—but would she love you, if she knew who and what you were?"

"Oh, I love Lady Cicely! I love Lady Cicely!" repeated Titmouse, dolefully.

"Then, get pen, ink, and paper, if you would not lose her for ever!"

"Here they are, Mr Gammon!" exclaimed Titmouse, hastily stepping to his desk which lay on the table; and with tremulous eagerness he got out a quire of writing-paper and took a pen. "Suppose *you* write, Mr Gammon," said he suddenly—"my hand trembles so! Lord! I feel so sick, I'll sign anything you like!"

"Perhaps it would be better," replied Gammon, sitting down, and dipping his pen into the inkstand; "it may save time." He commenced writing; and, as he went on, said at intervals—"Yes, Titmouse! Thank God, all is now over! It shall no longer be in Lord Dredlington's power—no, nor any one's—to beggar you—to transport you—to take your noble wife from you!"

"Oh, no, no! You know Lady Cicely's taken me for better for worse, for richer for poorer!" interrupted Titmouse, in a sort of agony of apprehension.

"Ah, Titmouse! But she did not know, when she said that, that she was speaking to a"—

"What! wouldn't it have held good?" exclaimed Titmouse, perfectly aghast.

"We need not speculate on a case that cannot arise, my dear Titmouse," replied Gammon, eyeing him steadfastly, and then resuming his writing.

"This paper becomes, as they say at sea, your sheet-anchor!—Here you shall remain—the owner of Yatton—of this splendid house—husband of Lady Cecilia—a member of parliament—and in due time, as 'my Lord Drelincourt,' take your place permanently in the Upper House of Parliament, amongst the hereditary legislators of your country. Now, Mr Titmouse, sign your name—and as boldly and steadily as you can—and there's an end for ever of all your unhappiness!"

Titmouse eagerly took the pen, and, with a trembling hand affixed his signature to what Gammon had written.

"You'll sign it too, eh?" he inquired timidly.

"Certainly, my dear Titmouse."—Gammon affixed his signature, after a moment's consideration.—"Now we are both bound—we are friends for life! Let us shake hands, my dear Titmouse, to bind the bargain!"

They did so, Gammon cordially taking into his hands those of Titmouse, who heaved a convulsive sigh, and in his anxiety and excitement, never once thought of asking Mr Gammon to allow him to read over what had been just signed.

"Oh, Mr Gammon!" exclaimed Titmouse, "it seems as if we'd been only in a dream! I begin to feel something like again!—it's really all right?"

"On my sacred word of honour," replied Gammon, laying his hand on his heart, "provided you perform the engagement into which you have this day entered."

"Never fear! honour bright!" said Titmouse, placing his on his heart, with as solemn a look as he could assume.

Mr Gammon having folded up the paper, put it into his pocket-book.

"I was a trifle too deep for you, Titmouse, eh?" said he good-humouredly. "How could you suppose me green enough to bring you the *real* documents?" he added, with perfect command of voice and feature.

"Where are they?" inquired Titmouse timidly.

"At a banker's, in a double-iron strong box, with three different locks."

"But, in course, you'll put them into the fire when I've performed my agreement, eh?"

Gammon looked at him for a moment, doubtful what answer to make to this unexpected question.

"My dear Titmouse," said he at length, "I will be candid—I must preserve them—but no human eye shall ever see them except my own."

"My stars!—Excuse me"—stammered Titmouse uneasily.

"Never fear my honour, Titmouse! Have you ever had reason to do so?"

"No—never! It's quite true! And why don't you trust *me*?"

"Have you forgotten!—Did I not trust you—as you supposed"—quickly subjoined Gammon, positively on the point of again committing himself!—"and when you fancied you really had in your power the precious original documents?"

"Oh! well"—said Titmouse, his face flushing—"but that's all past and gone."

"You *must* rely on my honour—and I'll tell you why. What would be easier than for me to pretend to you that the papers which you might see me burn, were really the originals—and yet he no such thing?"

"In course—yes; I see!" replied Titmouse—who, however, had really not comprehended the case which Gammon had put to him. "Well—but—I say—excuse me, Mr Gammon"—said he, hesitatingly returning, as Gammon imagined, to the charge—"but—you said something about the real heir."

"Certainly. There is such a person, I assure you!"

"Well—but since you and I, you know, have made it up, and are friends for life—eh? What's to be done with the fellow? (betwixt ourselves!) "

"That," said Gammon, taken a little aback by the unexpected question, "is at present no concern—nay, it never will be any concern of yours, or mine. Surely it is enough for you,

that you are enjoying the rank and fortune belonging to some one else? Excuse me, but I can't help reminding you—the natural son of a cobbler—figuring away as the Right Honourable Lord Drelincourt—while all the while, the real Lord Drelineourt is—nay, at this moment, pining, poor soul! in poverty and obscurity."

"Well"—said Titmouse, contemptuously—"I daresay he's used to it, so it can't hurt him much! But I've been thinking, Mr Gammon," dropping his voice, "couldn't we get him—pressed? or enlisted into the army?—He's a deuced deal better out of the way, you know, for both of us!"

"Sir!" interrupted Gammon, speaking seriously, and even with a melancholy and apprehensive air—"leave the future to *me*. I have made all requisite arrangements, and am myself implicated already to a fearful extent on your behalf; the only person on earth, beside myself, who can disturb my efforts on your behalf, is yourself."

Here a gentle tapping was heard at the door.

"Be off!" shouted Titmouse, with angry impatience! but Mr Gammon, who was anxious himself to be gone, stepped to the door, and opening it, a servant entered—a tall, graceful footman, with powdered hair, shoulder-knot, and blue and yellow livery—and who obsequiously intimated to Mr Titmouse, that Signor Sol-fa had been in attendance for at least half an hour.

"A—a—I don't sing to-day—let him come to-morrow," said Titmouse, with attempted ease, and the servant withdrew.

"Farewell, Mr Titmouse—I have an important engagement awaiting me at the office—so I must take my leave. Will you execute the necessary documents so soon as they are ready? I will cause them to be prepared immediately."

"Oh, yes!"—and he added in a lower tone—"take care, Mr Gammon, that no one knows *why!*—eh, you know?"

"Leave that to *me*!—Good-morn-

ing, Mr Titmouse," replied Gammon, buttoning his surtout, and taking up his gloves and hat; and having shaken Titmouse by the hand, he was the next moment in the street—where he heaved a prodigious sigh—which, however, only momentarily relieved his pent-up bosom from the long-suppressed rage, the mortification, the wounded pride, and the wild apprehension with which it was nearly bursting. Why, what a sudden and dismaying disaster had befallen him! And what but his own inconceivable folly had occasioned it? His own puppet had beaten him; had laid him prostrate; 'twas as though Prospero had permitted Caliban to wheedle him out of his wand!—What could Gammon possibly have been thinking about, when he trusted the originals into the hands of the little knave whom he had just quitted? As Gammon recognised no overruling Providence—considering that nothing could help being what it was—he was completely at a loss to account for an act of such surpassing thoughtlessness and weakness as he had committed—at the mere recollection of which, as he walked along, he ground his teeth together with the vehemence of his emotions. After a while, he reflected that regrets were idle—the future, not the past, was to be considered; and how he had to deal with the new state of things which had so suddenly been brought about. All he had thenceforth to trust to, was his mastery over the fears of a fool.

But was Gammon *really*, on consideration, in a worse position than before? Had Titmouse turned restive at any time while Gammon possessed the documents in question, could he have had more effectual control than

he still had, while he had succeeded in persuading Titmouse that such documents were still in existence? Could the legality of the transaction which Gammon sought to effect, be upheld one whit the more in the one case than in the other, if Titmouse took it into his head resolutely to resist? Again, could a transaction of such magnitude, could so serious a diminution of Titmouse's income, remain long concealed from his father-in-law, Lord Dredlington, who, Gammon knew, was every now and then indicating much anxiety on the subject of his son-in-law's finances? Was it possible to suppose the Earl disposed to acquiesce, in any event, in such an arrangement? Suppose again Titmouse, in some moment of caprice, or under the influence of wine, should disclose to the Earl the charge on the estate given to Gammon; and that, either sinking, or revealing, the true ground on which Gammon rested a claim of such magnitude? Gracious heavens! thought Gammon—fancy the Earl really made acquainted with the true state of the case! What effect would so terrible a disclosure produce upon him?

Here a bold stroke occurred to Mr Gammon: what if he were himself, as it were, to take the bull by the horns—to be beforehand with Titmouse, and apprise the Earl of the frightful calamity which had befallen him and his daughter? Gammon's whole frame vibrated with the bare imagining of the scene which would probably ensue. But what would be the practical use to be made of it? The first shock over, if, indeed, the weak old peer survived it—would not the possession of such a secret give Gammon a complete hold upon the Earl, and render him, in effect, obedient to his wishes?

BOOK THE EIGHTH.

CHAPTER I.

MR GAMMON OFFERS HIS HAND AND HEART TO MISS AUBREY. AN EXCITING LOVE-SCENE—IN WHICH KATE BEHAVES WITH GREAT PROPRIETY.

THE object which Gammon had originally proposed to himself, and on which he had unwaveringly fixed his eye amidst all the mazy tortuosities of his course, since taking up the cause of Tittlebat Titmouse, was his own permanent establishment in the upper sphere of society ; conscious that, above all, could he but once emerge into political life, his energies would insure him speedy distinction. With an independent income of £2000 a-year, he felt that he should be standing on sure ground. But above and beyond this, there was one dazzling object of his hopes and wishes, which, unattained, would, on several accounts, reudeer all others comparatively valueless—a union with Miss Aubrey. His heart fluttered within him at the bare notion of such an event. What effect would be produced upon that beautiful, that pure, high-minded, but haughty creature—for haughty to him bad Kate Aubrey ever appeared—by a knowledge that he, Gammon, possessed the means—Bah ! accursed Titmouse !—thought Gammon, his cheek suddenly blanching as he recollect ed that through him those means no longer existed.—Stay !—Unless, indeed—* * *

Which would, however, be all but impossible—perilous in the extreme !

Absorbed with these reflections, he started, on being accosted by the footman of the Earl of Dredlington ;

who, observing Gammon, had ordered his carriage to draw up, to enable his lordship to speak to him. It was the end of Oxford Street nearest to the City.

"Sir—Mr Gammon—good-day, sir!"—commenced the Earl, with a slight appearance of disappointment, and even displeasure, "pray has anything unfortunate happened"—

"Unfortunate ! I beg your lordship's pardon"—interrupted Gammon, colouring visibly, and gazing with surprise at the Earl.

"You do not generally, Mr Gammon, forget your appointments. The Marquis, I, and the gentlemen of the Direction, have been waiting for you in vain at the office for a whole hour."

"Good Heavens ! my lord—I am confounded !" said Gammon, suddenly recollecting the engagement he had made with the Earl : "I have forgotten everything, in a sudden fit of indisposition, with which I have been seized at the house of a client, at Bayswater. I can but apologise, my lord"—

"Sir, say no more ; your looks are more than sufficient ; and I beg that you will do me the honour to accept a seat in my carriage, and tell me whither you will be driven. I am at your service, Mr Gammon, for at least an hour; longer than that I cannot say, as I have to be at the House : you re-

member our two Bills have to be forwarded a stage."

Since his lordship was as peremptory as politeness would permit him to be, in got Gammon, and named THE GUNPOWDER AND FRESHWATER COMPANY's Offices, in Lothbury, in the hopes of finding yet some of the gentlemen whom he had so sadly disappointed; and thither, having turned his horses' heads, drove the coachman.

"Sir," said the Earl, after much inquiry into the nature of Gammon's recent indisposition, "by the way, what can be the meaning of my Lord Tadpole's opposition to the second reading of our Bill, No. 2?"

"We offered his lordship no shares, my lord—that is the secret. I saw him a few days ago, and he sounded me upon the subject; but—I'm sure your lordship will understand—in a company such as ours, my lord"—

"Sir, I quite comprehend you, and I applaud your vigilant discrimination. Sir, in affairs of this description, in order to secure the confidence of the public, it is a matter of the last importance that none but men of the highest—by the way, Mr Gammon, how are the GOLDEN EGG shares? Would you advise me to sell?"

"No—to hold, my lord, a little longer. We are going, in a few days' time, to publish some important information concerning the prospects of the undertaking, of the most brilliant character, and which cannot fail to raise the value of the shares, and then will be the time to sell! Has your lordship signed the deed yet?"

"Sir, I signed it last Saturday, in company with my Lord Marmalade. I should not like to part with my interest in the company, you see—Mr Gammon—hastily; but I am in your hands"—

"My lord, I am ever watchful of your lordship's interests."

"By the way, will you dine with me to-morrow? We shall be quite alone, and I am anxious to obtain an accurate account of the present state of Mr Titmouse's property; for, to tell you the truth, I have heard of one or

two little matters that occasion me some uneasiness."

"Can anything be more unfortunate, my lord? I am engaged out to dinner for the next three days—if indeed I shall be well enough to go to any of them," said Gammon suddenly, and with an agitation which could have escaped the observation of few persons except the Earl of Dredlington.

"Sir—I exceedingly regret to hear it; let me trust that some day next week I shall be more fortunate. There are several matters on which I am desirous of consulting you. When did you last see Mr Titmouse?"

"Let me see, my lord—I—don't think I've seen him since Monday last, when I casually met him in one of the committee-rooms of the House of Commons, where, by the way, he seems a pretty frequent attendant."

"I'm glad to hear it," replied the Earl, somewhat gravely, and, as Gammon imagined, with a slight expression of surprise, or even distrust. Gammon therefore fancied that the Earl had received recent intelligence of some of the wild pranks of his hopeful son-in-law, and wished to make inquiries concerning them of Gammon.

"Will you, sir—by the way—have the goodness to write at your earliest convenience to General Epaulette's solicitors, and tell them I wish to pay off immediately £12,000 of his mortgage? Oblige me, sir, by attending to this matter without delay; for I met the General the other day at dinner—and—I might possibly have been mistaken, sir—but I fancied he looked at me, as if he wished me to feel myself his debtor. Do you understand me, sir? It annoyed me; and I wish to get out of his hands as soon as possible."

"It shall be attended to, my lord, this very day," replied Gammon, scarcely able, troubled though he was, to suppress a smile at the increasing symptoms of purse-pride in the Earl, whose long-empty coffers were being so rapidly and unexpectedly replenished by the various enterprises into

which, under Gammon's auspices, his lordship had entered with equal energy and sagacity! While the Earl was speaking, the carriage drew up at the door of the company's office, and Gammon alighted. The Earl, however, finding that all the gentlemen whom he had left there, had quitted, immediately returned westward, and reached the House in time for the matters of business there which he had mentioned to Mr Gammon.

That gentleman soon dropped the languid demeanour he had worn in Lord Dredlington's presence; and having reached his own office, addressed himself with energy and decision to a great number of important and difficult matters demanding his attention, principally connected with several of the public companies in which he was interested, and one of which, in particular, required the greatest possible care and tact, in order to prevent its bursting—prematurely. He had also to get through a considerable arrear of professional affairs, and to write several letters on the private business of Lord Dredlington and Mr Titmouse. Nay, this harassed gentleman had one or two still more urgent calls upon his attention. First came the action against himself for £4000 penalties, for bribery, arising out of the Yatton election, and as to which he had received, that afternoon, a very gloomy "*opinion*" from Mr Lynx, who was 'advising' him on his defence. Much, in the same plight, also, were Messrs Bloodsuck, Mudflint, and Woodlouse, for whom Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap were defending similar actions; worried out of their lives by daily letters from their terror-stricken clients, as to the state, progress, and prospects of the several causes in which they were so deeply interested. All these actions were being vigorously pressed forward, with a view to trial at the ensuing York Assizes; had been made special juries; and, infinitely to Gammon's vexation and alarm, he had found, on hurrying to retain Mr Subtle, that he, Mr Sterling, and Mr Crystal, had been already

retained for the plaintiffs! Lastly, he was dreadfully teased by an action for Seduction, which had, a few days before, been brought against Mr Titmouse; and which Gammon, finding it to be a very aggravated case, was making great efforts to compromise. To each and every of these matters he gave the attention that was due—and, about seven o'clock, having finished his labours for the day, repaired, a good deal exhausted, to his chambers at Thavies' Inn.

After a slight repast, he proceeded to draw up confidential "*instructions*" for Mr Frankpledge, to frame the deeds necessary to carry into effect his contemplated arrangement with Titmouse. That did not take him long; and having sealed up his packet, and addressed it, he threw himself down on the sofa, and gave himself up to anxious meditation, aware that he was now, as it were, touching the very crisis of his fortunes. Again, again, and again, he recurred to the incident of the day—the destruction of his documents by Titmouse; and cursed his own inconceivable stupidity, even aloud. Yet he could not avoid indulging at the same time in secret pride and exultation at the presence of mind which he had displayed—the successful skill with which he had encountered so sudden, singular, and serious an emergency. But what would be the effect of the destruction of those documents, upon certain secret arrangements of his connected with Titmouse's recovery of the Yatton property? This was a question occasioning Gammon profound perplexity and apprehension.

Then, as to his rent-charge of £2000 per annum on the Yatton estates—he bethought himself, with no little uneasiness, of some expressions concerning Titmouse's property, let fall by the Earl that day: and if his lordship should persevere in his determination to become minutely acquainted with the state of Titmouse's property, how could the new and heavy incumbrance about to be imposed upon it, possibly escape discovery? and if it did, how was it to be accounted for or support-

ed? Perdition!—It seemed as if fate were malignantly urging on a catastrophe!

"Shall I," thought Gammon, stretched on his sofa, with folded arms, and corrugated eyebrows, "wait till I am challenged on the subject, and then fire my shot, and bring his lordship down from the tight-rope? Then, however, I cannot but appear to have known Titmouse's defective title from the very beginning; and who knows what liabilities, civil or criminal—of fraud or conspiracy—may in that case be attached to what I have done! Shall I wait for a convenient, though early opportunity, and rush, with dismay and confusion, into the Earl's presence, as with a discovery only just made? By Heaven!" here he started up and paced his chamber—"but the thing wears already an ugly appearance. If it come out, what an uproar will be in the world! The lightning will fall on my head first, unless I take care. The discovery will doubtless kill Lord Dredlington; and as for his daughter, it may overturn the little reason she has! . . . Well—and not much harm done to society, either!" thought he, with a contemptuous smile.

Passing from this subject, Mr Gammon surveyed his other relations with the Earl, which were becoming daily more involved and critical. He had seduced his lordship into various mercantile speculations, such as had already placed him in a very questionable point of view, as having taken deliberate, systematic advantage of the raging mania for bubble companies. In fact, Gammon had, by his skilful but not over-scrupulous manœuvring, already put into Lord Dredlington's pocket some forty thousand pounds—simply stolen from the silly and greedy public—and at the same time involved him in liabilities which he never dreamed of, and even Gammon himself had not contemplated. Then he warmed with his apparent proximity to parliament—to that part of Titmouse's bargain Gammon resolved to hold him to the letter—which he would be sure of entering on the next

election. By that time he would have realised a sum, through his connection with the various companies, which, even independently of the income to be derived thereafter from the Yatton property, would render him so far independent as to warrant him in dissolving partnership with Messrs Quirk and Snap, and quitting at least the practice of the profession.

Mr Gammon was a man of powerful mind, possessing energies of a high order, and for the development and display of which he felt, and fretted when he felt, his present position in society afforded him no scope whatever—till, at least, he had entered upon that series of bold but well-conceived plans and purposes with which he has been represented as occupied, since the time of his first becoming secret master of the fortunes of Titmouse. His ambition was boundless, and he felt within himself a capacity for the management of political affairs of no ordinary magnitude, could he but force himself into the regions where his energies and qualifications could be discovered and appreciated. Indeed, I will undertake to say, that, had Gammon been only a good man, he would in all probability have become a great one!

To proceed, however, with the matters then occupying his busy brain.

There was yet one upon which all his thoughts settled with a sort of agitating interest—his connection with the Aubreys; and whenever that name occurred to his thoughts, one beauteous image rose before him like that of an angel—I mean Miss Aubrey. She was the first object that had ever excited in him any, the faintest semblance of the passion of *love*—that love, I mean, which is in a manner purified and sublimated from all grossness or sensuality, by a due appreciation of intellectual and moral excellence. When he dwelt upon the character of Miss Aubrey, and for a moment realised the possibility of a union with her, he felt, as it were, elevated above himself. She was the magnet that would draw him out of his moral degradation. And indeed it is a problem—what

might have been the effect, on Mr Gammon, of a union with Kate Aubrey—if the lady reader will tolerate the notion; for she is not aware of what is coming! Then Miss Aubrey's person and countenance were extremely beautiful; and there was a certain bewitching *something* about her manners, which Gammon could only feel, not describe; in short, his passion for her had risen to an extraordinary pitch of intensity, and become a sort of infatuation. In spite of all that had happened at Yatton, he had contrived to continue, and was at that moment, on terms of considerable intimacy with the Aubreys; and had, moreover, been all the while so watchful over himself, as to have given none of them any reason to suspect the state of his feelings towards Miss Aubrey; while, on the other hand, nothing had ever afforded him the slightest intimation of the state of matters between Miss Aubrey and Delamere—with the exception of one solitary circumstance which had, at the moment, excited his suspicions—Mr Delamere's contesting the borough of Yatton. Though he had watched for it, however, nothing had afterwards occurred calculated to confirm his apprehensions.

He had taken infinite pains to keep a good name in Vivian Street, with the utmost art representing, from time to time, his disgust for the conduct and character of Titmouse, and the reluctance with which he discharged his professional duty towards that gentleman. He made a point of alluding to the "gross and malignant insult" which had been offered, at the hustings, to the venerable Vicar of Yatton! and which, he said, was a sudden suggestion of Mr Titmouse's, and carried into effect by "that vile Unitarian parson, Mudflint," in defiance of Mr Gammon's wishes to the contrary!—He represented himself as still haunted by the mild, reproachful look with which Dr Tatham had regarded him, as though he had been the author of the insult! The account which appeared in the *True Blue*, of his indignant interference on the occasion of Mr Delamere's being struck on the

hustings, was calculated, as Mr Gammon conceived, to corroborate his representations, and aid the impression he was so anxious to produce. For the same reason, whenever he had been at Yatton, he had acted with great caution and secrecy, so as to give no cause of offence to Dr Tatham; to whom he from time to time complained, in confidence, of those very acts of Mr Titmouse, which had been dictated to him by Mr Gammon. Thus reasoned Mr Gammon; but it would indeed have been singular had he succeeded as he desired and expected. He lost sight of the proverbial influence of one's wishes over one's belief. In imagining that he had concealed from the Aubreys all the unfavourable features of his conduct, was he not, in some degree, exhibiting the folly of the bird, which, thrusting its head only into the bush, imagines that it has thereby concealed its whole body?

The Aubreys knew amply sufficient to warrant a general dislike and distrust of Mr Gammon; but there existed obvious and grave reasons for avoiding any line of conduct which he might choose to consider offensive. Mr Aubrey justly regarded him as standing, at present, alone between him and some of his most serious liabilities. If Gammon, to accomplish objects to them undiscoverable, wore a mask—why challenge his enmity by attempting to tear off that mask? Mr Aubrey governed his movements, therefore, with a prudent caution; and though, after the election, and the infamous decision of the election committee, Gammon was received at Vivian Street—whither he went with no little anxiety and trepidation—it was with a visibly increased coolness and reserve, but still with studious courtesy; and beyond that distinct but delicate line, none of them ever advanced a hair's-breadth, which Gammon observed with frequent and heavy misgivings. But he felt that something must at length be done, or attempted, to carry into effect his fond wishes with reference to Miss Aubrey. Months had elapsed, and their relative position seemed totally unchanged, since

the first evening that his manœuvre had procured him a brief introduction to Mrs Aubrey's drawing-room. In fact, he considered that the time had arrived for making known, in some way or another, the state of his feelings to Miss Aubrey; and after long deliberation, he formed the bold resolution to do so without loss of time, and, moreover, personally. He had a fearful suspicion that he should be—at all events at first—unsuccessful; and now that, having taken his determination, he passed in rapid review all their intercourse, he perceived less and less ground for being sanguine; for he felt that Miss Aubrey's manner towards him had been throughout more cold and guarded than that of either Mr or Mrs Aubrey. Like a prudent general contemplating the contingencies of an important expedition, and calculating his means of encountering them, Gammon considered—persuasion failing—what means of compulsion had he? He came, at length, finally to the conclusion, that his resources were most available at that moment; and, moreover, that his circumstances required an immediate move.

The ensuing morning, about ten o'clock, he sallied forth from his chambers, and bent his steps towards Vivian Street, intending to keep watch for at least a couple of hours, with a view to ascertaining the happy possibility of Mrs Aubrey's going out with her children, unaccompanied by Miss Aubrey, affording him an opportunity of seeing her, alone and undisturbed; reasonably reckoning on the absence of Mr Aubrey at the Temple, whither he knew he always weot about half-past nine o'clock. That day, however, Mr Gammon lingered about, and watched, in vain; during the time that he stayed, only the servants and children quitting the door. The next day he walked deliberately close past the house. Was that brilliant and tasteful performance on the piano, *hers*? Again, however, he was unsuccessful. On the third day, from a safe distance, he beheld both Mrs and Miss Aubrey,

accompanied by a female servant and the children, walk in the direction of the Park, whither, but at a great distance, he followed their movements, with a beating heart. On a subsequent occasion, he saw Miss Aubrey leave the house, accompanied only by little Charles; and he turned his steps despondingly eastward. How little did either of these fair beings dream of the strict watch thus kept upon their every movement!

Two days afterwards, however, Gammon's perseverance was rewarded; for shortly after eleven o'clock he beheld Mrs Aubrey, accompanied by the two children, quit the house, and turn towards the Park. Gammon's heart began to beat hard. Though he had never cared much for dress, his appearance on the present occasion afforded indications of some little attention to it; and he appeared simply a well-dressed gentleman, in a dark-blue buttoned surtout, with velvet collar, and plain black stock, as, after a moment's somewhat flurried pause, he knocked and rang at Mr Aubrey's door.

"Is Mr Aubrey within?" he inquired of the pretty and respectable-looking maid-servant, who presently answered his summons.

"No, sir; he is never here later than half-past nine o'clock."

"Perhaps *Mrs* Aubrey"—

"No, sir; there is only Miss Aubrey at home; my mistress and the children are gone out into the Park."

"Perhaps—I could see Miss Aubrey for a moment?" inquired Gammon, with as matter-of-fact an air as he could assume.

"Certainly, sir—she is in the drawing-room. Will you walk in?" said the girl, who of course knew him well, as not an infrequent visitor at the house. So she led the way up-stairs, he following, and with somewhat fading colour.

"*Mr Gammon!*" he presently heard, as he stood on the landing, echoed in the rich and soft voice of Miss Aubrey, who seemed to speak in a tone of surprise, in answer to the servant's an-

nouncement. "Why, Fanny, did you not say that neither your master nor mistress was at home?"—Gammon next heard hastily asked, in a lower tone, by Miss Aubrey, and his countenance fell a little; for there was a tone of displeasure, or chagrin, in her voice, especially as she added, "You should have said that I was *engaged!* You knew that I was writing letters!"—However, show him in, Fanny;" and the next moment Mr Gammon found himself bowing his way towards Miss Aubrey, with whom, for the first time in his life, he found himself alone.

She was sitting writing at her desk, before which stood, in a small flower-glass, a moss-rose. There was a little air of negligence in the arrangement of her hair, and her light morning costume displayed her figure to infinite advantage. There was really something inexpressibly lovely in her whole appearance, seen though she was at that moment, by Gammon, through the faint mist of displeasure which she had thrown around herself.

"Good-morning, Mr Gammon," she commenced, rising a little from her chair; and sinking again into it, slightly turned it towards him, gazing at him with some curiosity.

"May I venture to hope, madam, that I am not intruding upon you?" said he, seating himself in the chair nearest to him.

"My brother always leaves at half-past nine; is he not at the Temple to-day, Mr Gammon?" she added a little eagerly—for the first time observing something unusual in the expression of his countenance—an air of mingled excitement and embarrassment.

"I really don't know—madam,—in fact, I have not been there to-day; I thought it better, perhaps"— He paused for a second.

"I sincerely trust, Mr Gammon," interrupted Miss Aubrey, slightly changing colour, and looking with great anxiety at her visitor—"that nothing unpleasant—nothing unfortunate—has happened: do, pray, Mr Gammon!" she continued earnestly, turning her chair full towards him—

"for Heaven's sake, tell me frankly! What has occurred?"

"I assure you, madam, upon my honour, that nothing whatever unpleasant has happened, that I know of, since last we met."

"Oh dear—I was getting so alarmed, Mr Gammon!" said she, with a faint sigh, her white hand hastily putting back the curls which were clustering rather more luxuriantly than usual over her cheek.

"Certainly, madam, you have no occasion to be alarmed; I have, however, an errand—one to *me*, at least, of inexpressible importance," he commenced, and in a lower key than that in which he had previously spoken; and there was something in his eye, and tone of voice, which quite riveted Miss Aubrey's eye upon his expressive—and now, she saw plainly, agitated, countenance. What can possibly be the matter? thought she, as she made a courteous but somewhat formal inclination towards him, and said something about "begging him to proceed."

"I hope, madam, that, comparatively few as have been my opportunities of becoming acquainted with it, I may venture to express, without offence, my profound appreciation of your superior character"—

"Really, sir," interrupted Miss Aubrey anxiously—"you are not candid with me. I am now certain that you have some unpleasant communication to make! Do, I entreat of you, Mr Gammon, give me credit for a little presence of mind and firmness: let me know the worst, and be prepared to break it to my brother and sister!" Gammon seemed unable to bear her bright blue eyes fixed upon his own, which he directed to the floor, while his cheek flushed. Then he looked again at her,—and with an eye which explained all, and drove away the bloom from her cheek, while it also suspended, for a moment, her breathing.

"Oh, forgive me for an instant—for one moment bear with me, Miss Aubrey!" continued Gammon, in a voice of low and thrilling pathos—"this interview agitates me almost to death;

it is that which for a thousand hours of intense — absorbing — agonising doubts and fears, I have been looking forward to ! ” Miss Aubrey sat silent and motionless, gazing intently at him, with blanched cheek : he might have been addressing a Grecian statue. “ And now—now that it has at last arrived—when I feel as if I were breathing a new—a maddening atmosphere, occasioned by your presence — by the sight of your surpassing loveliness ”—

“ Gracious Heaven, sir ! what can you mean ! ” at length interrupted Miss Aubrey, with a slight start, as if suddenly recovering self-possession, at the same time slipping her chair a little further from Mr Gammon. “ I declare, sir, I do not in the least understand you,” she continued, with much energy ; but her increasing paleness showed the effect which his extraordinary conduct had produced upon her. She made a strong and successful effort, however, to maintain her self-possession.

“ I perceive, madam, that you are agitated ”—

“ Agitated ! —I am, sir ! Astonished ! — Shocked ! — I could not have imagined ”—

“ Madam ! madam ! at the risk of being deemed unkind—cruel—if I die for it, I cannot resist telling you that I reverence — I love you to a degree ”—

“ Oh, Heavens ! ” murmured Miss Aubrey, still gazing with an air of amazement at him. Several times she thought of rising to ring the bell, and at once get rid of so astounding an interruption and intrusion ; but for several reasons she abstained from doing so, as long as possible.

“ It would be ridiculous, sir,” said she, at length, with sudden spirit and dignity, “ to affect ignorance of your meaning and intentions ; but may I venture to ask what conduct of mine — what single act of mine—or word—or look—has ever induced you to imagine—for one moment to indulge so insane ”—

“ Alas, madam, that which you could not conceal or control—your in-

comparable excellence—your beauty —loveliness — Madam ! madam ! the mere sight of your transcendent charms ! —My soul sank prostrate before you the first moment that I ever saw you ”—

All this was uttered by Gammon in a low tone, and with passionate fervour of manner. Miss Aubrey trembled visibly, and had grown very cold. A little vinaigrette stood beside her—and its stinging stimulating powers were infinitely serviceable, and at length aided her in making head against her rebellious feelings.

“ I certainly ought to feel flattered, sir,” said she, rapidly recovering herself—“ by the high terms in which you are pleased to speak of me—of one who has not the slightest claim upon your good opinion. I really cannot conceive what conduct of mine can have led you to imagine that such an — an — application — as this could be successful—or received otherwise than with astonishment—and, if persisted in — displeasure, Mr Gammon.” This she said in her natural manner, and very pointedly.

“ Miss Aubrey — permit me ”— said Gammon, passionately.

“ I cannot, sir — I have heard already too much ; and I am sure, that when a lady requests a gentleman to desist from conduct which pains and shocks her—sir,” she added hastily and peremptorily—“ I beg you will at once desist from addressing me in so highly improper a strain and manner ! ”

“ Indulge my agonised feelings for one moment, Miss Aubrey,” said Gammon, with desperate energy—“ alas ! I had suspected—I had feared—that our respective positions in society would lead you to despise so comparatively humble and obscure a person in point of station and circumstances ”—

“ Sir ! ” exclaimed Kate magnificently, drawing up her figure to its utmost height — her manner almost petrifying Gammon, whose last words she had unaccountably imagined, at the moment, to amount to a bitter sarcastic allusion to their fallen fortunes,

and diminished personal consequence in society; but she was quickly undeceived, as he proceeded fervently—"Yes, madam—your birth—your family connections—your transcendent mental and personal qualities, shining all the brighter in the gloom of adversity"—

"I—I—I beg your pardon, sir—I misunderstood you," said Kate, discovering her error, and colouring violently—"but it is even more painful to me, to listen to the language you are addressing to me. Since you urge me to it, I beg you to understand, sir, that if by what you have been saying to me, I am to gather that you are making me an offer of your addresses—I decline them at once, peremptorily, as a thing totally out of the question, under any conceivable circumstances!" The tone and manner in which this was said—the determination and hauteur perceptible in her striking and expressive countenance, blighted all the nascent hopes of Gammon; who turned pale, and looked the image of misery and despair. The workings of his strongly marked features told of the agony of his feelings. Neither he nor Miss Aubrey spoke for a few moments. "Alas! madam," at length he inquired in a tremulous voice, "am I presumptuous, if I intimate a fear—which I dare hardly own, to myself even, that I am too late—that there *is some more fortunate!*"—Miss Aubrey blushed scarlet.

"Sir," said she, with quick indignant energy, "*I should* certainly consider such inquiries—most—presumptuous—most offensive—most unwarrantable!"—and indeed her eyes quite shone with indignation. Gammon gazed at her with piercing intensity, and in silence.

"You cannot but be aware, sir, that you are greatly taxing my forbearance—nay, sir, I feel that you are taking a great liberty in making any such inquiries or suggestions," continued Miss Aubrey, proudly, but more calmly; "but, as your manner is unobjectionable and respectful, I have no difficulty in saying, sir, unhesi-

tatingly, that the reason you hint at, is not in the least concerned in the answer I have given. I have declined your proposals, sir, simply because I *choose* to decline them—because I have not, nor ever can have, the least disposition to entertain them."

Gammon could not, at the moment, determine whether she really had or had not a pre-engagement: for our noble but agitated Kate had told the strict truth.

"Madam, you would bear with me, did you know the exquisite suffering your words occasion me! Your tone and manner appear to my soul to consign it to perdition—to render me perfectly careless about life," said Gammon with irresistible pathos: and Miss Aubrey, as she looked and listened, in spite of herself pitied him. "I might, perhaps, establish some claim to your favour, were I at liberty to recount to you my long unwearied exertions to shield your noble-spirited brother—nay, all of you—from impending trouble and danger—to avert it from yourself!"

"We are indeed deeply sensible of your kindness towards us, Mr Gammon," replied Miss Aubrey, with her usual sweetness and fascinating frankness of manner, which now he could not bear to behold.

"Suffer me, Miss Aubrey, but one word more," he continued eagerly, apprehensive that she was about to check him. "Were you but aware of the circumstances under which I had come to throw myself at your feet—myself, and all I have—nor is that little, for I am independent of the world as far as fortune is concerned—I shall soon be in the House of Commons"—Miss Aubrey exhibited still more unequivocal symptoms of impatience—"and for ever have abandoned the hateful walk in life to which for the last few years"—

"I suppose I must listen to you, sir, however uselessly to yourself, and disagreeable and painful to me. If, after all I have said, you think it becoming to persevere," said Miss Aubrey with calm displeasure—

But Gammon proceeded—"I must repeat, Miss Aubrey, that could you but catch a glimpse—one momentary glimpse—of the troubles—the dangers which lurk around you all—ininitely greater than any which you have even yet experienced, severe and terrible though these have been—which are every day coming nearer and nearer to you"—

"What do you mean, Mr Gammon?" interrupted Miss Aubrey alarmedly.

"—And which, eager and anxious as may, and shall be, my efforts, I may be unable any longer to avert from you—you would at least appreciate the pure and disinterested motives with which I set out upon my truly disastrous mission."

"Once more, Mr Gammon, I assure you that I feel—that we all of us feel—a lively gratitude towards you for the great services you have rendered us: but how can that possibly vary my resolution? Surely, Mr Gammon, you will not require me to enter again upon a most unpleasant"—
Gammon heaved a profound sigh.—"With regard to your intimation of the danger which menaces us—alas! we have seen much trouble—and Providence may design us to see much more—I own, Mr Gammon, that I am disturbed by what you have said to me on that subject."

"I have but one word more to add, madam," said Gammon in a low impassioned tone, evidently preparing to sink upon one knee, and assume an imploring attitude; on which Miss Aubrey rose from her chair, and stepping back a pace or two, said, with great resolution, and in an indignant manner—"If you do not instantly resume your seat, sir, I shall ring the bell: for you are beginning to take advantage of my present defenceless position—you are persecuting me, and I will not suffer it.—Sir, resume your seat, or I summon the servant into the room—a humiliation I could have wished to spare you."

Her voice was not half so imperative as was her eye. He felt that his cause was hopeless—he bowed pro-

foundly, and said in a low tone—"I obey you, madam."

Neither of them spoke for some moments. At length—"I am sure, sir," said Miss Aubrey, looking at her watch, "you will forgive me for reminding you, that when you entered I was engaged writing letters"—and she glanced at her desk—"for which purpose alone it is that I am not now accompanying my sister and the children."

"I feel too painfully, madam, that I am intruding; but I shall soon cease to trouble you. Every one has some great bitterness to pass through, at some time or other of his life—and I have this instant passed through mine," replied Gammon gloomily. "I will not say that *the bitterness of death is past*; but I feel that life has henceforth, as far as I am concerned, nothing worth pursuing."—Miss Aubrey remained silent while he spoke.—"Before we part, Miss Aubrey, and close, as far as I—nay, as far, it may be, as both of us are concerned—a memorable interview, I have yet one communication to make, to which you will listen with absorbing interest. It will be made to you in such confidence as, having heard it, you may consider yourself at liberty conscientiously to keep from every person upon earth; and I shall leave it to produce such effect upon you as it may."

"I shall not disguise from you, sir, that your demeanour and your language alarm me terribly," said Miss Aubrey, peculiarly struck by the sinister expression of his eye—one quite inconsistent with the sad, subdued, gentle tone and manner of his address. "I am not anxious to receive so dark and mysterious a communication as you hint at; and, if you think proper to make it, I shall use my own discretion as to keeping it to myself, or mentioning it to any one whom I may choose—of that I distinctly apprise you, sir. You see that I am agitated; I own it," she added, dropping her voice, and pressing her left hand against her side; "but I am prepared to hear anything you may choose

to tell me—that I ought to hear.—“Have mercy, sir,” she added in a melting voice, “on a woman whose nerves you have already sufficiently shaken!”

Gammon gazed at her with a bright and passionate eye that would have absorbed her very soul. After a moment’s pause—“Madam, it is this,” said he, in almost a whisper: “I have the means—I declare in the presence of Heaven, and on the word and honour of a man”—[Oh, Gammon! Gammon! Gammon! have you forgotten what occurred between you and your friend Titmouse one short week ago? Strange, infatuated man! what can you mean? What if she should take you at your word?]—“*of restoring to your brother all that he has lost*—THE YATTON PROPERTY, Miss Aubrey—immediately—permanently—without fear of future disturbance—by due process of law—openly and honourably.”

“You are trifling with me, sir,” gasped Miss Aubrey faintly—her cheek blanched, and her eyes riveted upon those of Gammon.

“Before God, madam, I speak the truth,” replied Gammon solemnly.

Miss Auhrey seemed struggling ineffectually to heave a deep sigh, and pressed both hands upon her left side, over her heart.

“You are ill, very ill, Miss Aubrey,” said Gammon with alarm, rising from his chair. She also arose, rather hastily; turned towards the window, and with feeble trembling hands tried to open it, as if to relieve her faintness by the fresh air. But it was too late; poor Kate had been at length overpowered, and Gammon reached her just in time to receive her inanimate figure, which sank into his arms. Never in his life had he been conscious of the feelings he that moment experienced, as he felt her pressure against his arm and knee, and gazed upon her beautiful but death-like features. He felt as though he had been brought into momentary contact with an angel. Every fibre within him thrilled. She moved not; she breathed not. He dared not kiss her lip, her cheek, her forehead, but

raised her soft white hand to his lips, and kissed it with indescribable tenderness and reverence. Then, after a moment’s pause of irresolution, he gently drew her to the sofa, and laid her down, supporting her head and applying her vinaigrette, till a deep-drawn sigh evidenced returning consciousness. Before she had opened her eyes, or could have become aware of the assistance he had rendered her, he had withdrawn to a respectful distance, and was gazing at her with deep anxiety. It was several minutes before her complete restoration—which, however, the fresh air entering through the windows, hastily thrown open by Gammon, added to the incessant use of her vinaigrette, greatly accelerated.

“I hardly know, sir,” she commenced, in a low and faint tone of voice, and looking languidly at him, “whether I really heard you say, or only dreamed that I heard you say, something most extraordinary about Yatton?”

“I pray you, madam, to wait till you are completely restored; but it was indeed no dream—it was my voice which you heard utter the words you allude to; and when you can bear it, I am ready to repeat them as the words, indeed, of truth and soberness.”

“I am ready, now, sir—I beg you will say quickly what you have to say,” replied Miss Aubrey with returning firmness of tone, and calmness of manner; at the same time, with trembling hand, passing her snowy handkerchief feebly over her forehead.

He repeated what he had said before. She listened with increasing excitement of manner; her emotions at length overmastered her, and she burst into tears, and wept for some moments unrestrainedly.

Gammon gazed at her in silence; and then, unable to bear the sight of her sufferings, turned aside his head, and looked towards the opposite corner of the room. How little he thought, that the object on which his eyes accidentally settled—a splen-

did harp—had been, only a few days before, presented to Miss Aubrey by Mr Delamere!

"What misery, Miss Aubrey, has the sight of your distress occasioned me!" said Gammon at length; "and yet why should my communication have distressed you?"

"I cannot doubt, Mr Gammon, the truth of what you have so solemnly told me," she replied, in a tremulous voice; "but will you not tell my unfortunate, my wronged, my almost broken-hearted brother?" Again she burst into a fit of weeping.

"Must I—dare I—say it, Miss Aubrey," presently inquired Gammon in a broken voice; "can I say it without occasioning what I dread more than I can express—your displeasure? The use to be made of my power *rests with yourself alone.*"

She shook her head bitterly and despairingly, and hid her face in her handkerchief while he proceeded.

"One word—one blessed word from your lips—and before this very day shall have passed away, I strike down the wretched puppet that at present defiles Yatton—take the first step to replace your noble-minded brother there—restore you all to its delicious shades—Oh, Miss Aubrey, how you will love them! A thousand times dearer than ever! Every trace of the despicable idiot now there shall vanish; and let all this come to pass *before I presume to claim*"—

"It is impossible, sir," replied Miss Aubrey, with the calmness of despair, "even were you to place my brother on the throne of England. Is it not cruel—shocking—that if you know my brother is really entitled, you will not restore him?—nay, it is shocking injustice!—What may be the means at your command I know not—I shall not inquire; if to be purchased only on the terms you mention"—she involuntarily shuddered—"be it so—I cannot help it; and if my brother and his family must perish because I reject your addresses"—

"Say not that word, Miss Aubrey!"—

"I have said it, sir," interposed Miss Aubrey, with dignity, "and no power on earth can make me unsay it!"

"O recall it!" said Mr Gammon. "For God's sake consider the consequences to your brother—to his family! I tell you that malice and rapacity are at this moment gleaming like the eyes of wild wolves, within a few paces of you—ready to rush upon you. Did you but see them as distinctly as I do, you would indeed shudder and shrink!"—

"I do, sir; but we trust in a merciful Providence," replied Miss Aubrey, clasping together her hands, "and resign ourselves to the will of Heaven."

"May not Heaven have brought about this meeting between us as a mode of"—

"Monstrous!" exclaimed Miss Aubrey, in a voice and with a look which for a moment silenced him.

"It is high time that you should leave me, sir," she presently added, determinedly. "I have suffered surely sufficiently, already; and my first answer, is also my last. I beg now, sir, that you will retire."

"Madam, you are obeyed," replied Gammon rising, and speaking in a tone of sorrowful deference. He felt that his fate was sealed. "I now seem fully aware, to myself even, of the unwarrantable liberty I have taken, and solicit your forgiveness"—Miss Aubrey bowed to him loftily.—"I will not presume to solicit your silence to Mr and Mrs Aubrey concerning the visit I have paid you?" he continued anxiously.

"I am not in the habit, sir, of concealing anything from my brother and sister; but I shall freely exercise my own discretion in the matter."

"Well, madam," said he, preparing to move towards the door, while Miss Aubrey raised her hand to the bell—"in taking leave of you," he paused—"let me hope, not for ever—receive my solemn assurance, given before Heaven! that, haughtily as you have repelled my advances this day, I will

yet continue to do all that is in my power to avert the troubles now threatening your brother—which I fear, however, will be but of little avail! Farewell, farewell, Miss Aubrey!" he exclaimed; and was the next moment rapidly descending the stairs. Miss Aubrey, bursting afresh into tears, threw herself again upon the sofa, and continued long in a state of excessive agitation.

Mr Gammon walked eastward at a rapid pace, and in a state of mind which cannot be described. How he loathed the sight of Saffron Hill, and its disgusting approaches! He merely looked into the office, for a moment, to inquire for his letters, saying that he felt too much indisposed to attend to business that day; and then betook himself to his solitary chambers

—a thousand times more solitary and cheerless than ever they had appeared before—where he remained in a sort of reverie for hours. About eleven o'clock that night, he was guilty of a strange piece of extravagance; for, his fevered soul being unable to find rest anywhere, he set off for Vivian Street, and paced up and down it, with his eye constantly fixed upon Mr Aubrey's house; he saw the lights disappear from the drawing-room, and reappear in the bed-rooms: them also he watched out—still he lingered in the neighbourhood, which seemed to have a sort of fatal fascination about it; and it was past three o'clock before, exhausted in mind and body, he regained his chamber, and throwing himself upon the bed, slept from mere weariness.

CHAPTER II.

MR GAMMON'S SKILFUL MANŒUVRES TO CRUSH MR AUBREY; AND THEY SEEM SECONDED BY FATE.

MR AUBREY had now spent nearly a year in the real study of the law; during which time I have not the least hesitation in saying, that he had made, notwithstanding all his dreadful drawbacks, more rapid progress than is generally made by even the most successful of law students. He had, moreover, during the same period, communicated to the reviews five or six exceedingly able political dissertations, and several important contributions to historical literature; and the reader will not be surprised to learn, that such exertions as these, and such anxieties as were his, had told visibly on the appearance of Mr Aubrey. He was thin; his eye oppressed;—his cheek had lost its colour, his spirits their buoyancy, except in the few intervals permitted, by his

harassing labours, of domestic enjoyment. He still bore up, however, against his troubles with an unyielding resolution; feeling that Providence had called upon him to do his uttermost, and await the result with patience, and faith. Nothing had occurred during this long interval to brighten his prospects—to diminish his crushing load of liability by a hair's weight. But his well-disciplined mind now stood him in noble stead, and enabled him to realise a daily consciousness of advancement in the pursuits to which he had devoted himself. Well indeed may it be said, that there is no grander spectacle for angels or men, than a great mind struggling with adversity. To us, indeed, it is consolatory, encouraging, ennobling. Therefore, O Aubrey! do we now con-

tinue to contemplate you with profound interest, nor the less, because we perceive the constant presence with thee of *One* whose mighty assistance is dependent upon thy confidence in it. Hope ever, therefore, and struggle on !

Mrs Aubrey had returned home within about half an hour after Gammon's leaving Vivian Street, and to her Miss Aubrey instantly communicated the extraordinary proposal which he had made to her, all, in fact, that had passed between them—with the exception of the astounding information concerning the alleged possibility of their restoration to Yatton. The two ladies had, indeed, determined on concealing from Mr Aubrey the visit and proposal of Gammon, at all events for the present; but their agitation increasing as he questioned them concerning the cause of their restrained and embarrassed manner, on his return home that evening, rendered suppression impossible; and Kate at length told him frankly, excepting only the matter above mentioned, the singular and harassing incident which had happened in his absence. Blank amazement was succeeded by vivid indignation in Mr Aubrey, as soon as he had heard of this attempt to take advantage of their circumstances; and for a long time he was excessively agitated. In vain they tried to soothe him; in vain did Kate throw her arms fondly round him, and implore him, for all their sakes, to take no notice, to Mr Gammon, of what had happened; in vain did she protest that she would give him instant intelligence of any future attempt by that person to renew his absurd and presumptuous offer; in vain both reminded him, with great emotion, of the fearful power, over all of them, in Mr Gammon's hands. Aubrey was peremptory and inflexible, and, moreover, frank and explicit; and told them, on quitting home the next morning, that, though they might rely on his discretion and temper, he had resolved to communicate that day, either personally or by letter, with Mr Gammon; not only peremptorily forbidding any renewal of his propo-

sals, but also requesting him to discontinue his visits in Vivian Street.

"Oh, Charles! Charles! be punctually home by six!" exclaimed they, as he embraced them both at parting, and added, trembling and in tears, "consider the agony—the dreadful suspense we shall be in all day!"

"I will return by six, to a minute! Don't fear for *me!*" he replied, with a resolute and forced smile—which, however, instantly disappeared, as soon as he had quitted their presence.

Old Mr Quirk was the next morning, about ten o'clock, over head and ears in business of all kinds—and sadly missed the clear-headed and energetic Gammon; so fearing that that gentleman's indisposition must still continue, inasmuch as there were no symptoms of his coming to the office as usual, he took off his spectacles, locked his room door, in order to prevent any one by any possibility looking on any of the numerous letters and papers lying on his table; and set off to make a call upon Mr Gammon—whose countenance, flushed and harassed, strongly corroborated his representations concerning the state of his health. Still, he said, he could attend to any business which Mr Quirk was prepared then to mention; whereupon Mr Quirk took from his pocket a piece of paper, drew on his glasses, and put questions to him from a number of memoranda which he had made for the purpose. Gammon's answers were brief, pointed, and explicit, on all matters mentioned, as might have been expected from one of his ability and energy—but his muddle-headed companion could not carry away a single clear idea of what had been so clearly told him; and without avowing the fact, of which he felt, however, a painful consciousness, simply determined to do nothing that he could possibly avoid doing till Mr Gammon should have reappeared at the office, and reduced the little chaos there into something like form and order.

Before he quitted Mr Gammon, that gentleman quietly and easily led the conversation towards the subject of

the various outstanding debts due to the firm.

"Ah, drat it!" quoth the old gentleman briskly—"the heaviest, you know, is—eh?—I suppose, however," he added, apprehensively, and scratching his head, I mustn't name *that*—I mean that fellow Aubrey's account—without our coming to words."

"Why—stay! stay," said Mr Gammon, with a gravely thoughtful air—"I don't see that, either, Mr Quirk. Forbearance has its limits. It may be abused, Mr Quirk."

"Ecod! I should think so!" quoth Mr Quirk eagerly—"and I know who's abused somebody's forbearance—eh, Gammon?"

"I understand you, my dear sir," replied Gammon, with a sigh—"I fear I must plead no longer for him—I have gone already, perhaps, much further than my duty to the firm warranted."

"It's a heavy balance, Gammon—a very heavy balance, £1446 odd, to be outstanding so long—he agreed to pay interest on't—didn't he, eh?—But really something ought to be done in it; and—come, Gammon, as you have had your turn so long, now comes mine!—Tip him over to me."

"I should be sorry to distress him, poor devil!"

"Distress him? Our bill must be paid. D—n him! why don't he pay his debts? I pay mine—you pay yours—he must pay his."

"Certainly. By the way," said Gammon suddenly, "if you were to take bold and decided steps, his friends would undoubtedly come forward and relieve him."

"Ay! ay!—What think you of three days—give him three days to turn about in?—There he's living all the while in a d—d fine house at the West End, like a gentleman, and looks down, I'll be sworn, on us poor attorneys already, beggar as he is, because he's coming to the bar!—Now mind, Gammon, no nonsense! I won't stand your coming in again as you did before—if I write—honour between thieves! eh?"

"I pledge my honour to you, my

dear sir, that I will interfere no more; the law must take its course."

"That's it!" said Mr Quirk, rubbing his hands gleefully; "I'll tip him a tickler, before he's a day older, that shall wake him up—ah, ha!"

"You will do me one favour, Mr Quirk, I am sure," said Mr Gammon, with that civil but peremptory manner of his, which invariably commanded Quirk's assent to his suggestions—"you will insert a disclaimer in the letter of its emanating from me—or being with my consent."

"Oh lud, yes! yes! anything."

"Nay—rather *against my wish*, you know—eh? Just for appearance's sake—as I have always affected to be so infernally civil to the man, till now?"

"Will you draw it up yourself? And then, so as the other matter's all right—no flinching—stick in as much palaver, Gammon!—aha!—as you like!" replied Quirk; who, as the proposal involved only a greater measure of courtesy on his part, without any sacrifice of his interest, regarded it with perfect indifference. He took his leave of Gammon in better spirits than those which he had carried with him. It having been thus determined on by the partners, that within a day or two's time, Mr Aubrey should be required to pay the whole balance, under penalty of an arrest—Gammon, on being left alone, folded his arms as he sat beside his almost undisturbed breakfast-table—and meditated on the probable results of this his first hostile move against Mr Aubrey. "I wonder whether she's told him," thought he, with a slight palpitation, somewhat increased by a rather peremptory knock at his outer door. The colour suddenly deserted his cheek as he started from his seat, scattering on the floor nearly a dozen unopened letters which had been lying at his elbow, on the table; and he stood still for a moment to subdue a little of his agitation, so as to enable him to present himself with some show of calmness before the visitor whom he felt perfectly certain that he should see on opening the door. He was right.

The next minute beheld him ushering into his room, with a surprising degree of self-possession, Mr Aubrey, whose countenance showed embarrassment and agitation.

"I have called upon you, Mr Gammon," commenced Aubrey, with forced calmness, taking the seat to which Mr Gammon courteously motioned him, and then resumed his own, "in consequence of your visit, yesterday, in Vivian Street—of your surprising interview with my sister—your most extraordinary proposal to her."

Mr Gammon listened respectfully, with an air of earnest attention, evidently not intending to make any reply.

"It cannot surprise you, sir, that I should have been made acquainted with your procedure, immediately on my return home yesterday evening. It was undoubtedly my sister's *duty* to do so. Sir, she has told me all that passed between you."

"I cannot presume, Mr Aubrey, to find fault with anything Miss Aubrey may have thought proper to do; she *cannot* do wrong," replied Gammon calmly, though Mr Aubrey's last words had occasioned him lively anxiety as to the extent of Miss Aubrey's communication to her brother. He observed Mr Aubrey's eyes fixed upon him steadfastly, and saw that he was labouring under suppressed excitement. "If I have done anything calculated to inflict the slightest pain upon a lady for whom I have so profound"—he saw the colour mounting into Mr Aubrey's cheek, and a sterner expression appearing in his eye—"a respect, or upon yourself, or any of your family, I am distressed beyond measure."

"I perfectly appreciate, Mr Gammon, the position in which we stand with regard to each other," said Mr Aubrey. "Though I am fearfully changed in respect of fortune, I am not a whit changed—we are *none of us* changed," he continued proudly, "in respect of personal feeling and character."

He paused: Gammon spoke not. Presently Mr Aubrey resumed—"I

am, as we are all, deeply sensible of the obligation which you have conferred upon us, and at the same time feel, that we are, to a great extent, placed at your mercy."

"Pray—I beg, Mr Aubrey, that you will not speak in a strain which really hurts my feelings," interrupted Gammon earnestly; "and which nothing on my part either has justified or can justify."

"Sir," continued Mr Aubrey firmly, "I by no means meant to wound your feelings, but merely to express my own; and let me, Mr Gammon, without the least reserve or circumlocution, inform you that both my sister and I, have felt vivid dissatisfaction at your conduct of yesterday; and I have deemed it expedient to lose no time in informing you that your proposals are utterly out of the question, and can never be entertained, under any circumstances, for one moment."

Had Aubrey been—instead of the mere pauper he really was, and in the presence of one whom he knew able to cast him instantly into prison—at that moment in the position which he had formerly occupied, of wealth and greatness, he could not have spoken with an air of more dignified determination, and even *hauteur*: which Gammon perceived, and fully appreciated.

"I am perfectly aware, sir, of the disparity between Miss Aubrey and myself in point of position," said he, coldly.

"I have said nothing of the kind, that I am aware of, nor would I, on any account, say anything offensive to you, Mr Gammon; but it is my duty to speak explicitly and decisively. I therefore now beg you to understand that your overtures must not, in any shape, or at any time, be renewed; and this I must insist upon, without assigning or suggesting any reason whatever."

Gammon listened attentively and silently.

"I presume, Mr Gammon, that I cannot be misunderstood?" added Mr Aubrey, with a perceptibly increased peremptoriness of manner.

"It would be difficult to misunder-

stand what you say, sir," replied Gammon, in whose dark bosom Mr Aubrey's words had, as it were, stung and roused the serpent PRIDE—which might have been seen with crest erect, and glaring eyes. But Mr Gammon's external manner was calm and subdued.

"It gives me pain to be forced to add, Mr Gammon," continued Mr Aubrey, "that after what has taken place, we all of us feel that it will be better for you to discontinue your visits at my house. I am sure your own sense of delicacy will appreciate the necessity which exists for such a suggestion on my part?"

"I perfectly understand you, Mr Aubrey," replied Gammon, in the same grave and guarded manner which he had preserved throughout their interview. "I shall offer no apology, sir, for conduct which I do not feel to require one. I conceive that I had a perfect right to make, with all due deference and respect, the offer which it appears has given you mortal offence; for reasons, it may be, which you conceive to justify you, but which I neither am able, nor wish to speculate upon. It is impossible to see Miss Aubrey, without becoming sensible of her loveliness, both of person and character. I have paid them homage: for the rest, the issue is simply—unfortunate. While I may not feel disposed, even if inclined, to disregard your strict injunctions, I take leave to say, that my feelings towards Miss Aubrey cannot alter; and if in no other way they can be gratified, there is yet one which"—here he looked greatly moved, and changed colour—"yet remains open to me—to exhibit my regard for her in a tenfold anxiety to preserve her—nay, all of you, Mr Aubrey, from the approach of difficulty and danger. That much Miss Aubrey may have also told to you, of what passed between us yesterday." He paused—from emotion apparently; but he was only considering intently whether he should endeavour to ascertain if Mr Aubrey had been put, by his sister, in possession of his—Gammon's—last communica-

tion to her; and then, however that might be, whether he should himself break the matter to Mr Aubrey. But he decided both questions in the negative, and proceeded, with a little excitement of manner—"There are dangers menacing you, I grieve to say, Mr Aubrey, of the most serious description, which I may possibly be unable to avert from you! I fear I am losing that hold upon others which has enabled me hitherto to save you from rapacity and oppression! I regret to say that I can answer for others no longer; but all that man can do, still will I do. I have been bitterly—fearfully disappointed; but you shall ever find me a man of my word—of as high and rigid honour, perhaps, even Mr Aubrey, as yourself"—he paused, and felt that he had made an impression on his silent auditor—"and I hereby pledge myself, in the presence of Heaven, that so far as in me lies, there shall not a hair of any of your heads be touched." Again he paused. "I wish, Mr Aubrey, you knew the pressure which has been for some time upon me—nay, even this very morning"—he cast a melancholy and reluctant eye towards the letters which he had gathered up, and which he had replaced beside him on the breakfast table—"I have this morning received a letter—here it is—I know the handwriting, which I almost dread to open." Mr Aubrey changed colour.

"I am at a loss to know to what you are alluding, Mr Gammon?" he interrupted anxiously.

"I will not at present say more on the subject, Mr Aubrey; I devoutly hope my negotiations may be successful, and that the affair may not for many months, or even years, be forced upon your attention! Still, were I to do so, one effect, at least, it would have—to satisfy you of my honourable and perfectly disinterested motives in the offer which I presumed to make Miss Aubrey."

"Well, sir," replied Mr Aubrey, with a melancholy air, and sighing deeply, "I can only place my trust in Providence—and I do. I have endur-

ed much already; and if it be the will of Heaven that I should suffer more, I hope it will be proved that I have not suffered already—in vain!"

"Mr Aubrey," said Gammon, gazing at him with a brightening eye, "my soul owns the sublime presence of VIRTUE, in your person! It is exalting—it is ennobling—merely to be permitted to witness so heroic an example of constancy as you exhibit!" —He paused, and for some moments there was silence—"You do not distrust me, Mr Aubrey?" said Gammon, at length, with a confident air.

"No, Mr Gammon!" replied Mr Aubrey, eyeing him steadfastly. "I'm not aware that I ever had any reason for doing so."

Shortly afterwards he took his departure; and as he bent his steps slowly, and with thoughtful air, towards the Temple, he saw one or two things, on his own part, during his interview with Gammon, to regret—namely, sternness and pride; but nothing on the part of Gammon, that had not been admirable. Could Mr Aubrey, however, have seen the Satanic smile which settled upon Mr Gammon's features, as soon as, after cordially shaking his hand, he calmly shut the door upon Mr Aubrey, it might have occasioned some few misgivings as to Mr Gammon's sincerity. He resumed his seat, and meditated upon their recent interview. Almost the first glance which he had caught of Mr Aubrey's countenance, and the very first tones of his voice which had fallen on Gammon's ear, had inspired him with a deadly animosity against poor Aubrey, whose pride Gammon resolved to trample upon, and crush into the dust. He was acquainted with the state of Aubrey's little finances, almost to a pound; for Aubrey had ever felt it a duty to be frank with him upon that subject. He turned over in his mind carefully the two promissory notes for five thousand pounds each, which he held in his hands, and the best mode of setting into motion with the hands of another, those two dreadful instruments of torture and oppression—which, judicious-

ly applied, might have the effect of humbling the pride and breaking the determination of Aubrey, and his sister. Long he considered the subject, in every point of view: and at length—"Ay, that will do!" said he to himself aloud; sighed, smiled, and gently tapped his fingers upon his ample forehead. Shortly afterwards, having ordered his laundress to clear his breakfast table, he took pen, ink, and paper, and sketched off the following draft of a letter, to be copied by Mr Quirk, and signed in the name of the firm, and sent, Gammon finally determined, early in the ensuing week:—

"SAFFRON HILL, 9th July 18—.

"DEAR SIR,—Owing to a serious and unexpected pecuniary outlay which we are called upon to make, we feel ourselves compelled to avail ourselves of whatever resources lie within our reach. Having been disappointed in several quarters, we are obliged to remind you of the heavy balance we have against you of £1446, 14s. 6d. You must be aware of the length of time during which it has been standing; and trust you will forgive us if we at length apprise you that it is absolutely impossible for us to allow of any further delay. Unless, therefore, the whole of the above balance, or at least £1000 of it, be paid within three days of the date hereof, we regret to inform you we have finally made up our minds to let the law take its course. We feel the less hesitation in saying thus much, because we are persuaded that, with a little exertion, you might long ago have liquidated this heavy balance, or the greater part thereof." (Mr Gammon wrote as nearly in the peculiar style of Mr Quirk as he could.)

"In writing thus, Messrs Quirk and Snap feel it only due to their partner, Mr Gammon, to add that he is no party to this application. Messrs Q. and S. have felt, however, in making it, that the interests of the firm have already suffered long enough, through their deference to the personal wishes and feelings of one of the

firm ; and but for whom, their heavy balance would have been called for long ago, and, no doubt, in due course discharged.

"We regret being unable to vary or depart from the determination above expressed ; and truly hope your resources are of that nature that we shall be spared the unpleasantness of commencing legal proceedings.

"And we remain, dear sir,

"Yours obediently,

"QUIRK, GAMMON, & SNAP.

"CHARLES AUBREY, ESQUIRE,

"Vivian Street."

Exactly on the seventh day from that on which Mr Gammon had made his ill-omened advances towards Miss Aubrey, did the above dreadful and heartless letter reach its destination—being delivered into Mr Aubrey's hands while he was intently perusing a heavy set of "papers," which, at his request, Mr Weasel had allowed him to take home. The painful scene which ensued I shall spare the reader—only mentioning that poor Miss Aubrey became almost frantic, treating herself as the sole occasion of this disaster. That very morning, at breakfast, he had been talking of selling out of their precious remnant in the funds, the sum of £105, to enable him to become a pupil with Mr Crystal, at the suggestion of the Attorney-General.

What was to be done in this fearful emergency none of them knew—except consenting to an immediate sale of all their plate, books, and furniture. Their affliction, indeed, knew no bounds. Even Mr Aubrey, though for a long time he bore up heroically, was at length overcome by the visible agencies of the dear beings whose ruin was involved in his own.

Had not Gammon been prompt in his vengeance ? So thought they all. But—

What was to be done ? A word will suffice to explain Mr Aubrey's fearful position. It will be recollected, that about a twelvemonth before, he had been left in possession of a balance of £1063, after paying the sum of

£4000 to Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, Messrs Runnington, and Mr Parkinson, in the way which has been already mentioned. Since then, by incessant exertion, he had realised the sum of £150 by contributions to literary journals ; and, by means of a severe and systematic economy, this sum, together with about £200 taken from his store of £1063, had sufficed to cover their whole year's expenditure. "Twas impossible to carry economy further than they did, without, poor souls, positive injury to their health, and stinting the little children, as Mr and Mrs Aubrey often said to each other when alone, with tears and sighs of anguish.

Alas ! misfortune followed him like a bloodhound, let him turn his steps whithersoever he might ! Naturally anxious to make the most of his little store of £1063, so long as any considerable portion of it could be spared from their immediate personal necessities, he looked about in all directions for some safe and profitable investment, which might produce him a little more income than could be derived from the funds. He cautiously avoided having the slightest connection with any of the innumerable joint-stock speculations then afloat, and of which he saw distinctly the ruinous tendency ; and this, moreover, in spite of the artful occasional representations of Mr Gammon. Having consulted his banker, and also a member of the House of Commons—one of the city members—a man of reputed wealth, and great mercantile experience and sagacity, and with whom he had been intimate while in the House—confirmed by their approval, and also that of Mr Weasel and Messrs Runnington, all of whom poor Aubrey anxiously consulted concerning the disposal of this his little ALL ; about six weeks after the period of his settlement with Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, he invested five hundred pounds in the purchase of a particular foreign stock. Safe and promising as it appeared, however, at the very moment when it was in the highest repute with capitalists of all descriptions

both at home and abroad—from scarce any assignable reason, but forming one of the many unaccountable instances of fluctuation to which property of that kind is proverbially liable—Aubrey had hardly held his scrip for a month, when, to his dismay, he found the stock falling—falling—falling—down, down, it went, till his scrip was so much waste paper! His loss was irretrievable. The wealthy member whom he had consulted, lost upwards of a hundred and fifty thousand pounds, and was driven to the verge of ruin. Mr Weasel, even caution personified, in dealing with the little accumulation of his hard earnings, lost upwards of a thousand pounds; and Mr Runnington, about double that sum. It required a great stretch of fortitude on the part of Mr Aubrey to sustain this severe and sudden blow with anything like equanimity.—You should have seen and heard Mrs Aubrey and Miss Aubrey, on that sad occasion, in order fully to appreciate the rich and melting tenderness of woman's love, sympathy, and fortitude! While with them, Aubrey felt as in the protecting presence of two angels.

This catastrophe—for surely such it was—had left him about £350 only in the funds, and in his banker's hands a little balance of some fifty or sixty pounds, to meet his current expenses. The above amount, at the time when Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap's letter reached him, had been necessarily diminished to about £290; which was positively all the money he had in the world, to save himself, and those dependent on him, from absolute destitution. Yet he was now peremptorily called upon, within three days' time, to pay the sum of £1446, 14s. 6d.

He hurried off, early the next morning, in consternation, to Messrs Runnington, to apprise him of this disastrous state of things. Mr Runnington, with a heavy heart and gloomy countenance, set off instantly to the office of Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap. He saw Mr Gammon, who told him

with a consummately-dissembled air of disgust, to go in to Mr Quirk, or Mr Snap. He did so, and found them inexorable. Mr Quirk doggedly told Mr Runnington that he had been out of pocket long enough, and would not be fooled by one of his own partners any longer. Mr Runnington quitted them, fairly at his wits' end; and, on his return, told Mr Aubrey, whom he had left at his office, that he had done, and could do, "nothing with the vultures of Saffron Hill." Mr Runnington felt that his unhappy client, Mr Aubrey, was far too critically situated with respect to Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, to admit of his threatening, on Mr Aubrey's behalf, to refer their exorbitant and monstrous bill to taxation. He knew not, in fact, what suggestion to offer—what scheme to devise—to extricate Mr Aubrey from his present dreadful dilemma. As for applying for pecuniary assistance from friends, Mr Aubrey's morbidly sensitive soul revolted from the bare thought. What—borrow! Overwhelmed as he already was, it would be indeed grossly unprincipled! Was not one, alone, of his generous friends, at that moment under a liability on his behalf of more than ten thousand pounds? No; with gloomy composure he felt that, at last, *his hour was come*; that a prison-wall must soon intervene between him—poor broken-hearted soul!—and the dear beloved beings from whom, as yet, he had never been once separated—no! not for one moment deprived of blessed intercourse and communion with them—his wife—Kate—his unconscious little children—

Kate, however, got desperate; and, unknown to her brother, though with the full privity of his weeping wife, wrote off a long—a heart-rending letter, to good old Lady Stratton, whose god-daughter she was, telling her everything. Kate sate up half the night writing that letter and it was blistered with her tears. She took it in the morning, herself to the post-office, and she and Mrs Aubrey awaited the issue with trembling and fearful solicitude. Often, on their knees,

and with sighs and tears, they besought the pitiful mercy of their unseen Heavenly Father—that He would either relieve them, or give them patience, and resignation to His will.

I have hardly heart to recount the events which followed upon poor Kate's adventure; but they form a striking exemplification of the mysterious manner in which Providence, for its own awful and wise purposes, frequently sees fit to accumulate troubles and sorrows upon the virtuous.

Old Lady Stratton had been for some months in feeble health, and the receipt of Kate's letter occasioned her infinite distress. It will be remembered that she had long before effected a policy of insurance upon her life for £15,000, always intending to bequeath it, as a little portion, to poor Kate. She had many mouths—in fact, nearly a year and a half before—given the necessary instructions to her solicitor, Mr Parkinson of Grilston, for making her will, so as to carry into effect her kind intentions towards Kate; bequeathing also legacies of £500 a-piece to each of Mr Aubrey's little children. How it came to pass, however, I scarcely know—except by referring it to that sad superstitious weakness which makes people often procrastinate the execution of so all-important an instrument as a will; but at the time when Kate's letter arrived, that intended will had not been executed, still lying at Mr Parkinson's office. Feeling greatly indisposed, however, shortly after she had received Miss Aubrey's letter, she sent off a messenger for Mr Parkinson to come to her, with her will; and within an hour afterwards, her attendants found it necessary to despatch another messenger for her physician, Dr Goddart. Before drawing a cheque for the sum of £700, or £800, intended to be placed forthwith at Mr Aubrey's disposal, she awaited Mr Parkinson's return, that he, who managed all her affairs, might inform her of the exact balance then at her banker's. He was absent from Grilston when the messenger arrived, but was followed; and about seven o'clock

that evening reached Lady Stratton's residence, carrying with him her will, ready prepared for execution. His chief clerk also accompanied him, lest, by any possibility, a witness should be wanting. The countenances of the domestics warned him that there was not one moment to be lost; and he hastened at once into Lady Stratton's bed-chamber. There she lay, venerable old lady, propped up by pillows—her long white hair partially visible from under her cap. A hasty whisper from Dr Goddart apprised him of her critical situation; and writing materials stood ready prepared in the room against his arrival. She recognised him on his passing the foot of the bed, and in a feeble voice whispered—"My will!—my will!"

[Oh, hasten! delay not an instant, Mr Parkinson! If you did but know what depends on your movements! Could you at this moment—oh me!—catch a glimpse of the scene passing in Vivian Street!—Give her the pen, Mr Parkinson!—give her the pen!—Guide her hand!—Place it upon the paper!]

But it was too late. Before the pen could be placed within her fingers—and while she was muttering something about "*only a few words*"—those fingers had become incapable of holding a pen: for Lady Stratton at that moment experienced the paralytic seizure which Dr Goddart had been dreading for three or four hours before. Alas, alas! 'twas all useless: pen, ink, and paper were removed. She lingered speechless, and indeed insensible, till about nine o'clock the next morning, when death released the venerable sufferer. She had thus died intestate; and her next of kin became entitled to her property—which consisted of personality only. Had this event happened but two years before, Mr Aubrey and Kate would have been Lady Stratton's only next of kin: but now—alas!—Mr Titmouse was also one of her next of kin, and entitled, as such, to a *third* of all that which had been destined to the Aubreys alone!—In what a position were the Aubreys now placed? Titmouse

would directly insist on his right to administer, in preference to Aubrey—and would succeed in establishing his right; for was he not equally near of kin, and moreover the creditor, to a large extent, of Mr Aubrey—who was, besides, utterly insolvent? What, then, would be the consequences of this move on the part of Titmouse? He would get into his possession all the property of Lady Stratton—and though not entitled to withhold payment to Mr Aubrey and his sister of the shares due to them, he might interpose many obstacles in the way of their recovering, and make their insisting upon *their* rights, a pretext for his insisting on *his* own against Mr Aubrey, even to the uttermost extremity!—All these, and many other similar considerations, passed quickly in review before the troubled mind of Mr Parkinson. His fears were soon realised by events. Before the venerable deceased had been laid in Yatton churchyard, not far from her beloved friend, Mrs Aubrey, Mr Parkinson received a letter from Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, as the solicitors of Mr Titmouse, giving him formal notice of the title of *their* client, and requesting Mr Parkinson to lose no time in making an inventory of the effects of her ladyship, to whom Mr Titmouse intended to administer immediately. Mr Gammon himself went down, and arrived the day after the funeral. Guess his delighted astonishment on discovering the windfall which had come to his client, Mr Titmouse, in the policy of £15,000, the existence of which they had, of course, never dreamed of!

But there was another discovery,

which occasioned him not a little excitement, as his flushed cheek and suspended breath testified—alas! poor Aubrey's bond for £2000, with interest at five per cent!—an instrument which poor Lady Stratton, having always intended to destroy, latterly imagined that she had actually done so. It had, however, got accidentally mingled with other papers, which had found their way, in the ordinary course, to Mr Parkinson, and who was himself ignorant of its existence, since it lay folded in a letter addressed to Lady Stratton, till it came to light while he was sorting the papers, in obedience to the requisition of Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap. He turned pale and red by turns, as he held the accursed document in his fingers; probably, thought he, no one on earth but himself knew of its existence; and—and—he knew what the *deceased* would have done—but his sense of duty prevailed! Of course the party entitled to sue for the principal money secured by it, together with all arrears of interest which might be due upon it, was now Mr TITTLEBAT TITMOUSE!

— Surely some would have imagined this a dismal and wanton freak of Fortune—as far, at least, as concerned poor Kate Aubrey! But however Lady Cecilia Titmouse might attribute the direction of life's events to FATE, Kate Aubrey knew nothing of the existence, or actions of FORTUNE: the two words serving but as exponents of heathen ignorance, fallen upon, or effected by, those who choose to live WITHOUT God IN THE WORLD. Poor Kate! it was far otherwise with thee!

CHAPTER III.

MR AUBREY DISREGARDS GAMMON'S ADVICE, AND BECOMES THE GUEST
OF MR GRAB.

"FLY ! FLY !—For God's-sake, fly ! Lose not one moment of the precious respite which, by incredible efforts, I have contrived to secure you—a respite of but a few hours—and wrung from heartlessness and rapacity. In justice, much injured man ! to yourself—to all you hold dear upon earth—to the precious interests intrusted to your keeping, and involved in your destruction—again I say *Fly !* Quit the country, if it be for but never so short a time, till you or your friends shall have succeeded in arranging your disordered affairs. Regard this hasty and perhaps incoherent note, in what light you please—but I tell you it comes, in sacred confidence, from a firm and inalienable friend, whose present desperate exertions in your behalf you will one day perhaps be able to appreciate. Once more I conjure you to fly !—From other and greater dangers than you at present apprehend. I see the rack preparing for you !—Will you stay to be tortured?—and in the presence of the incomparable beings who—but my feelings overpower me ! Indeed, Mr Aubrey, if you disregard this intimation through weak fears as to its writer's sincerity, or a far weaker, and a wild notion of Quixotic honour and heroism—remember, in the moment of being overwhelmed, this note—and then do justice to its writer.—Your faithful, unhappy, distrusted friend,

"O. G.

"P.S.—For Heaven's sake burn, or otherwise destroy, this letter, as soon as you shall have read it."

Such was the letter which reached

Mr Aubrey's hands just as the time which had been fixed by Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, for payment of their bill, was expiring, and which occasioned him, as may be easily imagined, dreadful disquietude. It had found him in a state of the deepest depression—but yet vigorously striving to preserve, in the presence of his wife and sister, a semblance of composure and cheerfulness. More to pacify them than to satisfy himself, he had walked about town during the two preceding days still nearly dropping with exhaustion, in fruitless quest of those who might—as a matter of business—he disposed to advance him a thousand pounds on his own personal security, and on terms he scarce cared how exorbitant, to free him, at all events for a while, from his present exigency. All had been, however, in vain—indeed he had had no hopes from the first. And what was then to be done ? His soul seemed dying away within him. At times he almost lost all consciousness of his situation, and of what was passing around him. It appeared to be the will of Heaven, that his misfortunes should press him down, as it were, by inches, into the dust, and crush him. Those there were, he well knew, who needed but to be apprised of his circumstances, to step forward and generously relieve him from his difficulties. And he had little doubt that the exact object of Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, was to extort the amount of their exorbitant demand from *them* ! But where was all that to end ? What real good could it serve ? Awfully

involved as he was already—one, alone, of his friends being at that moment under a liability which must be discharged within a few months, of nearly *eleven thousand pounds*—was he to place others in a similar situation? What earthly prospect had he of ever repaying them? Lamentable as was his position, his soul recoiled from the bare thought.

But then came before his anguished eye, his wife—his sister—his children; and he flung himself, in an ecstasy of grief, on his knees, remaining long prostrate—and, for a while, *the heaven that was over his head seemed to be brass, and the earth that was under him, iron.* His heart might be wrung, however, and his spirit heavy and darkened; but no extent or depth of misery could cause him to forget for an instant those principles of honour and integrity—the very lights of life—by which all his conduct had been regulated. He resolved, therefore, to submit to the stroke apparently impending over him, with calmness, as to ruin inevitable; nor would he hear of any further applications to his friends, which, indeed, he felt would be only encouragement to those who held him in thrall-dom, to renew their exactions, when they found each succeeding pressure successful. Poor Kate had told him, as soon as her letter had been put into the post, with trembling apprehension as to the consequences, of her application to Lady Stratton; but did she think her fond broken-hearted brother could chide her? He looked at her for a moment, with quivering lip and eyes blinded with tears—and then wrung her hand, simply expressing a hope, that, since the step had been taken, it might be, in some measure at least, successful.

Mr Gammon's letter, as I have already intimated, filled Mr Aubrey with inexpressible alarm. Again and again he read it over with increasing agitation, and perplexity as to its true character and import—the real motive and object of its writer. Was the writer guilty of the duplicity which Mrs Aubrey and Kate had so vehemently imputed to him? Was he ac-

tuated by revenge? Or was he, as represented by Mr Quirk's letter, over-powered by his partners, and still sincere in his wishes to shield Mr Aubrey from their rapacity? Or was Mr Gammon suggesting *flight*, only as a snare? Was Mr Aubrey to be seduced into an act warranting them in proceeding to instant extremities against him? What could be the other matters so darkly alluded to in the letter? Were they the two promissory notes of five thousand pounds each, which he had deposited with Mr Gammon, who at length was peremptorily required by Mr Titmouse to surrender them up, and permit them to be put in suit? They were payable on *demand*—he reflected, and shuddered! Might it be, that Titmouse was desperately in want of money, and had therefore overpowered the scruples of Gammon, and disregarded the sacred pledge under which he assured Titmouse that the notes had been given? Mr Aubrey rejoiced that Mr Gammon's letter had been placed in his hands by the servant, when alone in his study, whither he had gone to write a note to Mr Runnington; and resolved, for the present, not to apprise Mrs Aubrey and Kate of its arrival. The *fourth* day after the receipt of Messrs Quirk and Snap's letter had now elapsed. Mr Aubrey did not venture to quit the house. All of them were, as may well be imagined, in a state of pitiable distress, agitation, and suspense. Thus also passed the *fifth* day—still the blow descended not. Was the arm extended to inflict it, held back, still, by Mr Gammon continuing thus the "*incredible efforts*" spoken of in his note?

The *sixth* morning dawned on the wretched family. They all rose at a somewhat earlier hour than usual. They could scarce touch the spare and simple breakfast spread before them, nor enjoy—nay, they could hardly bear—the prattle and gambols of the lively little ones, Charles and Agnes, whom at length they despatched back again to the nursery; for they were, in the highest possible state of excitement and anxiety, awaiting the arrival of the postman—this being the first morn-

ing on which they could, in the ordinary course, receive a letter from Lady Stratton in answer to that of Kate. 'Twas now a little past ten. The breakfast table had been cleared; and on hearing the agitating though long-expected *rat-tat* of the postman a few doors down the street, Mrs Aubrey and Kate started to the window. Their hearts beat violently when their eye at length caught sight of him, with his arm full of letters, knocking at the door opposite. Oh, had he a letter for them?—How long were their neighbours in answering his summons, and in paying the postage! Then he stood for nearly a minute laughing with a servant in the adjoining area—intolerable indeed was all this, to the agitated beings who were thus panting for his arrival! Presently he glanced at the packet in his hand, and taking one of the letters from it, crossed the street, making for their door.

"Heavens! He has one for us!" cried Miss Aubrey, excitedly—"I sha'n't wait for Fanny!" and, flying to the front door, plucked it open the instant after the postman had knocked. He touched his hat, on seeing, instead of a servant, the beautiful but agitated lady, who stretched forth her hand and took the letter, exclaiming, "Fanny will pay you"—but in an instant her cheek was blanched, and she nearly fell to the floor, at sight of the black border, the black seal, and the handwriting, which she did not at the instant recognise. For a moment or two she seemed to have lost the power of speech or motion; but presently her trembling limbs bore her into the parlour. "Oh! Charles—Agnes—I feel as if I were going to die—look"—she faltered, sinking into the nearest chair, while Mr Aubrey, having paid the postman, with much agitation, took the ominous-looking letter which she extended towards him. 'Twas from Mr Parkinson; and told the news of Lady Stratton's death, and the lamentable circumstances attending it; that—as the reader has heard—she had died intestate—and that Mr Titmouse had, as next of kin, become entitled to administration to her

effects All this disastrous intelligence was conveyed in a few hurried lines. "Oh, my God!" exclaimed Mr Aubrey, on having glanced over them. His colour fled, and he pressed his hand against his forehead. "She is dead!" said he in a low tone, at the same time giving Kate the letter, and hastening to Mrs Aubrey, who seemed nearly fainting. Each had uttered a faint scream on hearing his words. Mrs Aubrey swooned in his arms—and Kate sat like a statue, without even glancing at the fatal letter which she held in her hand, but gazing in a sort of stupor at her brother. She was unable to rise to Mrs Aubrey's assistance—of whose state, indeed, she appeared, from her vacant eye, to be hardly aware. At length a slight sigh announced the returning consciousness of Mrs Aubrey; and at the same time Miss Aubrey, with a desperate effort, regained her consciousness, and with a cheek white as the paper at which she was looking, read it over, as well as the trembling hands in which she held it would permit her.

"This is very—very—dreadful—Heaven is forsaking us!" at length she murmured, gazing woefully at her brother and sister.

"Say not so—but rather God's will be done," faltered Mr Aubrey, his voice, and countenance, evincing the depth of his affliction. "God help us!" he added, in a tone which at length, thrilling through the overcharged heart of his sister, caused her to weep bitterly; and if ever there was a mournful scene, it was that which ensued, ere this doomed family, slowly recovering from the first stunning effects of the shock which they had just received, had become aware of the full extent of their misery. They had ever felt towards Lady Stratton—who, as has been already said, had been poor Kate's god-mother—as towards a parent; and their affection had been doubled after the death of Mrs Aubrey. Now she was *gone*: she who would assuredly have stood, for a little while at least, between them and ruin, was *gone*! And by an inscrutable and awful Providence, that which

she had sacredly destined to them, and made no slight sacrifices to secure to them—and which would have effectually shielded them from the cruelty and rapacity of their enemies—had been diverted into the coffers of the most selfish and worthless of mankind—who seemed, indeed, as if he had been called into existence only to effect their ruin; even, as it were, *the messenger of Satan to buffet them!*

At length, however, the first natural transports of their grief having subsided, their stricken hearts returned to their allegiance towards Heaven; and Mr Aubrey, whose constancy at once strengthened and encouraged his partners in affliction, with many expressions of sincere and confident piety and resignation, reminded them that they were in the hands of Almighty God, who intended all earthly suffering, however unaccountable, however harsh and apparently undeserved its infliction, to contribute infallibly to the ultimate benefit of his children. And he reminded them, on that melancholy occasion, of the sublime example afforded by one whose griefs had infinitely transcended theirs—the patriarch Job; on whom were suddenly—and to him apparently without any reason or motive, except the infliction of evil undeserved—accumulated almost every species of misfortune which could befall humanity. The sudden and total loss of his substance, and of all his servants, he appears to have borne with fortitude. At length, however, was announced to him the loss of all his sons and daughters—

Then, Job arose and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped.

And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord.

In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.

Out of respect to the memory of their dear, venerable, departed friend, they immediately drew down all the blinds of their little house, thereby spreading around them a gloom simi-

lar to that within. A sad, a mournful little group they looked! This last sorrow seemed for a while to divert their thoughts from the peril which momentarily menaced them. They talked with frequent emotion, and with many tears, of their late friend—recalling, fondly, innumerable little traits of her gentle and benignant character. Towards the close of the day their souls were subdued into resignation to the will of the all-wise Disposer of events: they had, in some measure, realised the consolations of an enlightened and Scriptural piety.

They met the next morning at breakfast, with a melancholy composure. The blinds being drawn down, prevented the bright sunshine out of doors from entering into the little room where their frugal breakfast was spread, and where prevailed a gloom more in unison with their saddened feelings. To all who sat round the table, except little Charles, the repast was slight indeed: he had shortly before begun to breakfast down stairs, instead of in the nursery: and, merry little thing!—all unconscious of the destitution to which, in all human probability, he was destined—and of the misery which oppressed and was crushing his parents—he was rattling away cheerfully, as if nothing could disturb or interrupt the light-heartedness of childhood. They all started on hearing the unexpected knock of the general postman. He had brought them a letter from Dr Tatham; who, it seemed, was aware of that which had been the day before despatched to them by Mr Parkinson. The little Doctor's letter was exceedingly touching and beautiful; and it was a good while before they could complete its perusal, owing to the emotion which it occasioned them. 'Twas indeed full of tender sympathy—of instructive incentives to resignation to the will of God.

"Is not that indeed the language of a patriarch?" said Mr Aubrey—"whose figure is daily brightening with the glory reflected from the heaven which he is so rapidly approaching? In the order of nature,

a few short years must see him, also, removed from us!"

"Then we shall indeed be desolate!" said Kate, weeping bitterly.

"Heaven," continued her brother, "is speaking to us through one of its ministers in this letter! Let us listen in reverent humility!" They remained silent for some moments, Mr Aubrey re-perusing the long and closely-written letter of which he had been speaking. Presently he heard a knock at the street door—an ordinary single knock—such as was by no means unusual at that period of the morning; yet he scarce knew why—it disconcerted him. He kept, however, his eye upon the letter, while he heard Fanny opening the door—then a word or two whispered—after which the parlour door was hastily opened, and Fanny stood there, pale as death, shaking like an aspen-leaf, and unable, from fright, to speak:—a heavy step was heard in the passage—and then there stood behind the terror-stricken girl, a tall stout man, in a drab great-coat, with a slouched hat, and a thick walking-stick in his hand—looking over her shoulder into the parlour, whose dismayed occupants soon shared the panic of poor Fanny.

"Beg your pardon, sir," said he, civilly advancing into the room, and removing his hat—"is your name Charles Aubrey?"

"It is, sir," said Mr Aubrey, rising from his chair—by which time a second man was standing at the door.

"Sorry for it, sir," said the man, stepping close up to the wretched Aubrey, and touching him on the shoulder, at the same time holding out a piece of paper—the warrant by virtue of which he was then acting. The moment that he advanced towards Mr Aubrey, a dreadful shriek burst from Mrs Aubrey and Kate, who sprang forward, and threw their arms wildly round him. He implored them to restrain their feelings—though evidently greatly agitated himself.

"Will you let me look at your warrant?" said he mildly to the man who had arrested him, and remained standing close beside him. Mr Aubrey saw

at once that he was arrested for the heavy claim of Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap.*

"You see, sir, it's only my duty to do this here," said the officer respectfully, apparently touched by the agony of the two beautiful women who still clung wildly round one about to be torn ruthlessly from their arms;—"don't take on so, ladies—there's no great harm done yet."

"For mercy's sake, Agnes! Kate! as you love me!—Be calm! You afflict me beyond measure," said Mr Aubrey, who, though he had grown very pale, yet preserved, under the circumstances, a remarkable degree of self-possession. "Twas, however, a scene which he had been endeavouring to realise to himself, and prepare for daily, if not hourly, for the last week.

"Oh, mercy! mercy!—for God's sake have mercy on him! On us!"—exclaimed Mrs Aubrey and Kate.

"Oh, good men! kind men!—have mercy!" cried Kate desperately—"What are you going to do with him?"

"No harm, miss, you may depend on't—only he must go with us, seeing we're obligated for to take him."

"For Heaven's sake, don't—don't, for mercy's sake!" cried Kate, turning her agonised face towards the man, her hair partially dishevelled, still clasping her brother with frantic energy. Mrs Aubrey had swooned, and lay insensible in her husband's arms, supported by his knee; while Fanny, herself half-distracted, was striving to restore her by rubbing her cold hands.

"Lord, ladies! don't—don't take on in this here way—you're only a-hurting of yourselves, and you don't do the gentleman a bit of good, you know—'cause, in course, he's all the sorrier for going," said the second man, who had by this time entered the room, and stood looking on concernedly. But Miss Aubrey repeated her inquiries with wild and frantic impetuosity, for some time not aware that Mrs Aubrey lay insensible beside her.

"Jemmy—run and fetch the lady a sup of water from the kitchen—she's

* See APPENDIX.

gone into a dead faint—run, my man!" said the officer to his follower, who immediately obeyed him, and presently returned with a glass of water; by which time, both Kate, and her brother, and Fanny, were endeavouring, with great agitation, to restore Mrs Aubrey, whose prolonged swoon greatly alarmed them, and in whose sufferings, the sense of their own seemed for a while absorbed. The two men stood by, grasping their huge walking-sticks, and their hats, in silence. At length Mrs Aubrey showed symptoms of recovery—uttering a long deep sigh.

"I say—master," at length whispered the follower, "I'll tell you what it is—this here seems a bad business, don't it?"

"Jemmy, Jemmy!" replied his master sternly, "You a'n't got half the pluck of a *bum!*—There's nothing in all this when one's used to it, as I am. Business is business, Jem; and this here is ours!"

"P'raps the gemman don't rightly owe the money after all."

"Don't he? And the people we acts under has sworn he *does!*—Come, come, Jem, no chaffing! The sooner, I'm thinking, we have him off from all this here blubbering, the better."

"Bless'd if ever I see'd two such beautiful women afore," replied Jem. "I don't half like it; I wish we'd nabbed him in the street—and" he lowered his whisper—"if there's *much o'* this here sort o' work to be done, I've had enough of being a *bum* already, an' I'll go back to my business again, bad as times is!"

"Kind—good men!" said Kate, approaching them, and speaking with forced calmness—pushing aside her disordered hair from her pale cheeks, "Can't you leave him here—only a day longer?"

"Can't, miss—it's quite *unpossible*; it's not to be done for no money, short of debt and costs," said the officer respectfully, but rather doggedly—as if he were getting tired of the scene—"one would think we were a-going to murder the gemman! Once for all, if so be as he will only go as a gemman

should, to my little place in Chancery-Lane—(my name's Grab, miss, at your service, and there a'n't a better conducted lock-up nor mine in London, I assure you, nor where debtors is more comfortably looked arter)—he's no need to be there above a day or two—it may be less—and in course, his friends will come and bail him out; so don't be a-going on so, miss, when it's no manner o' use!"

"Charles! My love!" murmured Mrs Aubrey faintly—"they surely will not separate us? Oh! let us go together; I don't care where we go to, so long as I am with you."

"Do not ask it, my darling! my heart's love!" replied Mr Aubrey tenderly, still supporting her in his arm, and against his knee—and a tear fell from his eye upon her cheek—"I shall be exposed to but little inconvenience, I am certain; there can be no violence or insult offered me so long as I submit myself peaceably to the laws! And I may soon, please God, be back!"

"Oh, Charles! I shall die—I shall never survive seeing you carried away!" she replied—and her manner was becoming increasingly vehement.

"Agnes, Agnes!" said her husband reprovingly, "the mother must not desert her children: my heart will ache every moment that I am absent, if I think that my dear little ones have not a mother's protection."

"Kate will take care of them, love!" said Mrs Aubrey faintly; and her husband tenderly kissed her forehead. While this hurried colloquy between the wretched couple was proceeding, Kate was talking in low but impassioned tones to the two officers, who listened to her respectfully, but shook their heads hopelessly.

"No, miss—it can't be; it can't indeed."

"But you shall have everything in the house for your security—I have still a good many handsome dresses; jewels, all—all; surely they will produce something; and then there's plate, and books, and furniture—you can't think Mr Aubrey's going shamefully to run away!"

"If, as how, miss, you see, it was only ourselves that you had to do with—but, Lord love you, miss! we're only officers, and has our duty to do, and *must* do it!—why, we'd go a little out of our way, for to oblige a lady like you; but the people you must go to, is the gemmen whose names is here," pointing to the warrant; "they're the people as the money's owing to—Quirk, Gamm"—

"Don't name them! They are wretches! They are villains! They are robbing, then ruining, my wretched brother!" exclaimed Kate with dreadful vehemence.

"Kate, Kate!" cried Mr Aubrey, kindly but peremptorily—"in mercy to me, be silent! Restraine your feelings, or really I must hasten my departure."

"Oh, Charles!" faltered Kate, sinking down on a chair exhausted, and burying her face in her handkerchief.

"Now, sir—if *you* please," commenced Grab, turning to Mr Aubrey, "we must be thinking of going, seeing, I expect, I've another job on hand to-day; would you prefer coaching, or walking it? Excuse me, sir—I've seen many such things as this; and I know it's only a haggravating of your feelings to be stopping here—the longer the worse! What must be, must be,—had better be done at once, and got over with. I've been a-telling this here young lady a many times, that it's no use fretting—and that in course you'll be soon back again, when you've done what's needful; so hadn't my man here better go and get a coach?"

"It is so, indeed!" exclaimed Mr Aubrey with a profound sigh—and endeavoured, for some time, by all the means in his power, to soothe and pacify his wretched companions.

"Can I speak a word with you alone, before I go?" he presently inquired of the officer.

"In course, sir," replied Grab; and, promising to return within a minute or two's time, Mr Aubrey quitted the room, with Grab close at his heels; and presently they were both standing in his little study.

"Betwixt ourselves, sir," quoth

Grab in a confidential tone, "you've rather keen hands to deal with;" here he laid his finger along his nose, and winked his eye—"and you'll lose no time in turning yourself about. You understand, sir?"

"Perfectly," replied Mr Aubrey with a sigh. "Who gave you your instructions in this matter?"

"Mr Snap—the junior partner—it was him that left the writ, and gave me my directions to execute it."

"Are you sure? Was it not Mr Gammon?"

"No, sir—Snap—Snap; that little cockatoo of a chap. Mr Gammon called at my office half an hour afterwards, to be sure"—

"I thought so," interrupted Mr Aubrey quickly, his face flushing, and feeling relieved from a vast pressure.

"Ay," continued Grab phlegmatically, "he'll see you don't come to much harm in this matter"—

"What do yon mean?" inquired Mr Aubrey surprisedly.

"Lord! I could tell, by his way. He called to say that, since Mr Quirk had resolved to go agin you, he hoped we'd show you every attention, and deal easy by you"—

"Indeed!"

"Ay—indeed! And I'm thinking he said it was a cruel business—nay, I'm *sure* he did; and that, as for him, he washed his hands on't!" Mr Aubrey seemed confounded.

"I don't somehow think him and his partners are on the best of terms together—but that's no business o' mine, you know, sir! And now, sir, excuse me, but we must be jogging."

"But, my friend, is there really no way," inquired Mr Aubrey, with manifest perturbation, "by which I can delay accompanying you, for a few hours?"

"Oh can't, sir—*unpossible!*"

"You can remain in possession here—I will be in your custody—I have a little plate, books, and furniture, which would surely stand sufficient security"—

"It's no use, sir; go you must—and that without much longer shilly-shallying. It's no use!"

Aubrey seemed for a moment over-powered by his emotions.

"I fear, myself, that there is no alternative," said he; "but it will almost break the hearts of those ladies—one of whom is my wife"—His voice faltered.

"You take my advice, sir! Let my man here start off for a coach—you have a shirt or two put up, and an amusing book—or a bit of a cribbage-board, or a pack of cards, if they're at hand—and give these 'ere ladies the slip; if you'll believe me, sir, it's much the best way; and when you're once out o' the house, they'll come to, and make up their minds to it—never fear 'em. I knows how these things comes about again!"

"Send, then, for a coach—delay, I see, is worse than useless," said Mr Aubrey hastily, hearing steps approaching the study door, which was thrust open, and Mrs Aubrey and Miss Aubrey entered, unable any longer to endure his absence—and as if fearful lest, in mercy to them, he should be contriving to leave them secretly. Grab, having despatched his follower for a coach, at Mr Aubrey's earnest request to be left alone for a few minutes, withdrew—but first cast a keen scrutinising eye at the window—and then the chimney; and having closed the door, stood outside, in a position which commanded both door and window.

"Now, my own Agnes! my sweet Kate!" commenced Aubrey in a low earnest tone, having bolted the door to secure themselves from interruption during the few precious moments which remained to them before the arrival of the coach—"I must, within a few minutes, leave you! Remember—remember, loves!—I am unfortunate, but I am not disgraced!—I look on this as a dispensation of Providence—of an infinitely wise and gracious Providence; let us all learn submission, and resignation! Whether or not we are really the victims of treachery and hypocrisy, I am unable at present to tell; but let us strive to bear this last crowning indignity with the fortitude of Christians!—relying

on it, that God will overrule the most trying and disastrous events, for our eventual good! Kneel down! Let us bow before the throne of God, and supplicate his blessing and support, in this our greatest extremity!" He said this calmly; but his face was deadly pale, and his voice faltered—while they clung round him and heaved convulsive sobs, as, half unconsciously, they sunk for a moment on their knees with him. Then they rose—and certainly a gracious Providence had not listened in vain to the earnest, heart-felt cries uttered by those persecuted and heart-broken beings; for they felt a sense of composure stealing over their troubled bosoms—balm into their wounds—as if they had seen for a moment a bright light glancing through the gloom of their sorrows. Yet poor nature was wrung—wrung indeed! Mr Aubrey proceeded to make some little preparations for his departure—putting a five-pound note into his pocket—and leaving but little more behind him; and the servant, being summoned into the room, was despatched to put up a change of linen for him. He then conjured his wife and sister, as they loved him, to struggle against their feelings;—and to rely upon his pledge to send them, within two hours at the furthest, intelligence of his movements—assuring them of his confident belief, that in less than twenty-four hours he should have returned to them. While he was speaking in this strain, Mrs Aubrey suddenly quitted the room, and after a moment's absence returned, her pallid, agitated countenance overspread with a wild smile of delight, as she exclaimed breathlessly—"There, love! Dearest Charles! He says there is no harm in the world in my going with you in the coach—and, indeed, we may have rooms to ourselves!"

"My sweet Agnes"—

"I will—I will go with you, Charles—if I die for it! Nothing shall prevent me—even if I leave you at the door of the place you are going to!" It was in vain for Mr Aubrey to protest—as he did vehemently;—her

impassioned importunities were irresistible, and she rushed breathlessly up-stairs to prepare her dress to accompany him on his brief but melancholy journey. Within a few minutes she had returned, just as the sound of the coach-wheels approaching the door was heard. Mr Aubrey and Kate perceived the dangerous excitement under which she was labouring, and dreaded its effects; yet what could be done? He could not prolong his stay—and it would be infinitely more dangerous to leave her behind, now that she had set her heart upon accompanying him, than to permit her to do so. She carried down little Agnes in her arms—and had been almost suffocating her, and Charles, who walked after her, with kisses and convulsive embraces. Both the children were crying bitterly; and as soon as Mrs Aubrey had reached the parlour door, and heard the coach-steps letting down, she fell into violent hysterics.

"I'll tell you what, sir," whispered Grab, as he stood close beside Mr Aubrey, who was supporting Mrs Aubrey—"it wouldn't be amiss if I was to say you should come along with me at once, while this poor lady's insensible—and then when she'd have come to herself, and know'd you was *gone*, and no mistake—why—she'd in course think no more of it"—

"Oh! for God's sake—for God's sake! Remember your promise!" cried Aubrey, and in a voice which nearly reached the officer's heart: as it was, he simply shrugged his shoulders, and awaited the issue with no little impatience, but in silence. 'Twas in the midst of this heart-rending scene, which ensued during the next half-hour, that Kate displayed the strength of character which so remarkably distinguished her; and, completely mastering her own agitated feelings, essentially contributed towards Mrs Aubrey's restoration to a state which would admit of her at length setting off. The children had been removed—Mr Aubrey having bid them an agonising adieu; for he

knew not what accident or contrivance might occur to prevent his return to them—and after embracing his weeping sister, he supported Mrs Aubrey, Grab closely following them, into the coach. All three having got in, "Jem," as he was called, shut up the door, jumped up on to the coach-box, and then they drove away. Poor Mrs Aubrey, on taking her seat, drew from before her agitated yet beautiful countenance the long dark veil which she had drawn down while passing from the house into the coach, and gazed at Mr Aubrey with such an expression of mingled tenderness and agony, as was almost sufficient to have broken even the stony heart of Grab. She also held her husband's hand convulsively grasped within her own—as though fearful of their being even yet violently separated from each other. As they went along, in answer to Aubrey's anxious inquiries concerning the nature of the scenes which awaited him, Mr Grab told him that his—Grab's—lock-up was in Chancery-Lane, and would be found as comfortable a place as need be. He informed his prisoner, further, that he might have his choice,—whether to occupy a private apartment, with a bedroom opening into it,—or go into the public room, where would be also some dozen other debtors,—and in which case, of course, Mrs Aubrey must return home alone. Mr Aubrey inquired what would be the expense of private apartments, and was horrified on hearing—two guineas and a half a-day, paid in advance!—exclusive of board and attendance, which doubtless would be charged for on a commensurate scale. The prisoner and his wife gazed at each other in silence, and felt sick at heart.

"The smallest you have—at the very top of the house—would suffice for both a sitting and bedroom," said Aubrey, anxiously, "and we do not care a straw for furniture"—

"The room I told you of, or the public room, is all I've to offer you," replied Grab, doggedly—"and you needn't cry out before you're hurt; for it may be your friends will bail

you out before the night—before much harm's done!" His wretched companions continued silent for the remainder of the journey, till the coach drew up opposite the house of which they had been speaking. It was about half-way up Chancery-Lane, on the right hand side as you entered from the Strand. 'Twas a small, narrow, dingy-looking house, at the corner of a miserable court. The solitary window, level with the door, was strongly secured within by thick perpendicular iron bars. The outer door, at the top of a flight of about a dozen well-worn steps, stood open, leaving exposed to view an inner one at about a couple of yards' distance from the outer one; and on this inner door was a brass plate bearing the terrifying name—

"G R A B,

"OFFICER TO THE SHERIFF OF MIDDLESEX."

The upper part of the door was of glass, and secured on the inside, like the window, by strong iron bars. Aubrey's soul sank within him as his eye took in these various points of the dismal building—the first which he had ever been compelled to enter. The follower, immediately on the coach drawing up, jumped down, and running up the steps of the house, announced their arrival, and hurrying back, opened the coach-door, and let down the steps.

"Now, Jarvey—what's the damage?" inquired Grab, before any of them got out.

"Six shillings, your honour."

"You must tip, sir," quoth Grab to Mr Aubrey—who thereupon counted out all the silver he had except one solitary sixpence, and they descended, followed up the steps of the house, closely by Grab. Their hearts failed them, as they heard the sound of heavy jingling keys from within opening the door; and the next moment they stood within a short, narrow, and dark passage—the sallow ill-looking fellow who had admitted them, instantly closing, barring, and locking the door upon them.

"This here's the public room," quoth Grab with the confident air of a man

who feels in his own house; and, half opening a door on his left, they caught a glimpse of a number of men, some smoking; others sitting with their feet on the table, reading the newspapers; others playing at cards; and almost all of them drinking, and either laughing, talking, or singing.

"Now, sir—does this *here* suit your fancy?" inquired Grab rather sharply. Mr Aubrey felt his wife leaning heavily on his arm. "Mercy! I shall faint! I feel choked!"—she whispered.

"Show us instantly up-stairs, to your private room—east what it may," said Mr Aubrey hastily.

"It's only fair to tell you, sir, you pay in advance—and for the whole day, though you should be out again in a quarter of an hour's time—it's the rule of the house."

"Show us up-stairs, sir, without delay," said Mr Aubrey peremptorily.

"Jemmy! show the gemman and lady up!" exclaimed Grab briskly—on which Jem went forward, followed by Mr Aubrey, almost entirely supporting Mrs Aubrey, who was very faint—Grab bringing up the rear,—up the narrow and angular staircase. This led them into a tolerably well-furnished room; and Mrs Aubrey, on entering it, sank exhausted on the sofa. Here, again, the two windows were strongly secured with iron bars, which gave a peculiarly miserable appearance to the room. The unhappy couple gazed around them for a moment, in silence.

"Beg your pardon, sir," said Grab, entering, "but must trouble you for *two, twelve, six*; always pay in advance, as I told yon a-coming."

Aubrey, involuntarily shuddering, took out his pocket-book—Mrs Aubrey bursting into tears—and handed to Grab the only money he had—his five-pound note, requesting change.

"The lady would, perhaps, like a glass of negus?" inquired Grab.

"Certainly—bring up immediately a glass of cold sherry-and-water," replied Aubrey.

"That will be just *two, five, six* to bring back—shall have it directly, sir—change and all. Here's the bed-

room, and werry comfortable, sir," he added, opening a small door opposite the window—and then withdrew by that through which they had entered. The moment that they were left alone, Aubrey folded his arms tenderly around his wife, and kissed her cold pale cheek; and then helped her to remove her bonnet, which, with its heavy black veil, evidently oppressed her. Her rich dark hair fell disordered over her tippet; and with her flushed cheek and restless eye, would have given the beholder a vivid picture of beauty and virtue, in distress.

"Do promise me, Charles!" said she, looking fondly at him, "that I may go with you, wherever they will allow you to take me!"

"I trust, Agnes, that I shall be released before long. This is really a comfortable room, considering!" he added, evading her question.

"If only Kate and the children were here," she replied tremulously. "Poor things! I wonder what they are doing just now—Kate will break her heart, poor girl, if we don't return soon!"

"Never fear, Agnes. But let us look what kind of a bedroom they have given us. I hope we shall have no occasion, however, to occupy it. Come, let us see!"

"Twas small and close, to be sure, and had but one narrow window, secured, like all the others, by strong iron bars. It overlooked a little flagged yard, about thirty feet square, surrounded on all sides by high walls, portions of adjoining houses. It was here that the prisoners "*took the air*," and their escape was effectually prevented by close and strong bars of iron passing from side to side, at about ten feet distance from the ground. Mr and Mrs Aubrey looked down, and beheld two or three men sitting and standing beneath, who looked more like animals caged in a menagerie, than human beings. 'Twas to Aubrey a sickening sight; and turning from the window, they both re-entered the front room, as Grab returned with the sherry-and-water, and the change, which he told down on the table. He

then asked what they would like to have for dinner—cutlets, steaks, or chops—as he wished to know before Mrs Grab went out "to order the house dinner." They seemed, however, to loathe the idea of eating, not a little to the annoyance of their hospitable host; Aubrey earnestly begging him to send off a message instantly, with his card, to Mr Runnington.

"A couple of shillings for the man, sir," quoth the harpy; and, having received it, withdrew, leaving Mr and Mrs Aubrey to themselves for nearly an hour and a half; at the end of which period, their hearts leaped for joy to see Mr Runnington enter the room, with a countenance full of concern and sympathy.

"Well, but you shall not be much longer in this hateful hole, at any rate," said he, after some half-hour's anxious conversation with them; and ringing the bell, directed the man to send Grab up-stairs, and to fetch pen, ink, and paper. In a few minutes Grab appeared. "You've no objection, I suppose, Grab, to discharge Mr Aubrey on my undertaking?"

"In course not, sir," replied Grab readily; but he was not a little disappointed at so abrupt a close to his exactions. Mr Runnington sat down and began to write. "You had better send off to the office, and see if there's anything else there," he added, (meaning that Grab should search, as he was bound to do, for any other writs against Mr Aubrey which might be lodged with the sheriff, before discharging his prisoner out of custody).

"You don't apprehend anything there, do you?" inquired Mr Runnington rather seriously, without taking his eye from the paper on which he was writing.

"Heaven only knows! But I think not," replied Aubrey.

The following was the undertaking given by Mr Runnington, and which operated as an instant release of his oppressed and truly persecuted client:—

"Aubrey *ets.* Quirk and others.

"We hereby undertake to procure the execution of a good and sufficient

bail-bond herein, for the above-named defendant, in due time.

"RUNNINGTON & CO.
Defendant's Attorneys.

"To MR GRAB,
Officer of the Sheriff of Middlesex."

With this document lying before them, and awaiting the messenger's return from the sheriff's office, Mr Runnington and Mr Aubrey conversed together anxiously on the subject of Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap's bill. Mr Aubrey was sufficiently acquainted with the general course of practice to be aware, that, beyond requiring him to put in bail to the action—special bail, as it was called—no effectual step could be taken against him for several months to come—*i. e.* till Michaelmas term, in the ensuing *November*, however eager and active the plaintiffs might be: so that he had an interval of at least four months, in which, as the phrase is, "to turn himself about," and endeavour to discover some mode of extricating himself from his present serious dilemma. After reminding Mr Aubrey that neither a peer of the realm, nor a member of parliament, nor an attorney, could become bail for him, Mr Runnington requested the names of two or three confidential friends to whom he might apply to become security for Mr Aubrey; and as he should be at any time able to exonerate them from liability, by surrendering his person to his creditors, he felt no hesitation in applying to them to perform for him this act of kindness. "By the way," said Mr Runnington, in the course of their conversation, and with apparent carelessness, "could I say a word or two to you on a little matter of business? And will Mrs Aubrey excuse us for a moment?" turning towards her. She bowed, but with alarm in her features, and they withdrew, for a moment, into the adjoining bedroom.

"Put this into your pocket," said Mr Runnington, taking out the day's newspaper; and when you have an opportunity, read the account of what took place yesterday in the Court of King's Bench. It startled me not a little,

I can tell you; and the reason of my not having been at the office when your messenger arrived was, that I had not returned from Vivian Street, whither, and to the Temple, I had gone in search of you. For Heaven's sake, don't alarm Mrs Aubrey, or Miss Aubrey; but, if anything occur to you, do not lose one moment in putting yourself into communication with us. If possible, I will call at Vivian Street this evening." With this, they returned to the sitting-room, with nothing in their appearance calculated to alarm Mrs Aubrey, or even attract her attention.

Shortly afterwards Grab entered the room.

"All right, sir!" said he to Mr Runnington; and added, turning to Mr Aubrey, "you're no longer in my custody, sir!"

"Oh, Charles! thank God!—Let us not stay another moment!" exclaimed Mrs Aubrey, joyously starting up, and putting on her bonnet. "Oh, let us get once more into the open street!—the sweet fresh air!—Kate will go wild with joy to see us again—Oh, dear Mr Runnington! how can we sufficiently thank you?" she added, turning towards him enthusiastically. Within a few minutes' time they had quitted that dismal scene; and were again apparently free. On first stepping into the bright cheering sunlight, and bustling noisy street, it had a wondrous sort of freshness and novelty—to them. Now they were free to go whithersoever they chose!

Oh, blessed LIBERTY!—let an Englishman lose thee for but an hour, to become aware of thy value!—It seemed to Mr and Mrs Aubrey, as if ten times the real interval had elapsed between their entering and quitting the scene of his incarceration. With what exhilarated spirits they hastened homeward! alas! as if a millstone were not still suspended from their necks. But Mr Aubrey suddenly bethought himself of the newspaper given him by Mr Runnington; and it cost him, indeed, a great effort to assume a cheerfulness so foreign to his feelings.

CHAPTER IV.

MR GAMMON'S PROFOUND STRATEGIES.

WHILE, however, they are thus walking homeward, intending, in the event of Mrs Aubrey becoming fatigued, to take a coach, let me, that the reader may appreciate the paragraph to which Mr Runnington had so ominously called Aubrey's attention, turn for a while from this virtuous and afflicted couple, to trace the leading movements of that master-spirit of evil, Mr Gammon; for which purpose, it will be necessary to take up our history from the evening of the day in which Mr Aubrey had called at his chambers, to forbid him visiting any longer at Vivian Street. By that time, Mr Gammon had thoroughly thought out his plan of operations. What had passed between him and Miss Aubrey, and her brother, had satisfied him that the time for calling into action all his forces had arrived; and the exact end he proposed to himself was, to plunge Mr Aubrey at once into apparently inextricable and hopeless difficulty—into total ruin—so as to render them all more accessible to Mr Gammon's advances, and force Miss Aubrey into entertaining his addresses, as the sole means of effecting her brother's liberation!

For this purpose, it would be necessary to make him debtor to so large an amount as would preclude the interference of even the most liberally disposed of his friends. Those might probably be disposed to go as far as fifteen hundred pounds on his behalf, who could not be brought to think of twelve thousand—it being borne in mind, that one alone of Mr Aubrey's friends, Lord De la Zouch, was already liable, on his behalf, to some eleven thousand pounds, which would become

payable on the ensuing 24th of January. But the mask was not yet to be thrown off; Gammon resolved to appear the firm friend of Mr Aubrey to the last; deprecating vehemently, and striving to avert from him, the very proceedings which he was all the while, with secret skill and vigour, urging on against him. He determined, therefore, to recall Titmouse's attention to the two promissory notes for £5000 each; to pretend reluctance to allow them to be put in suit, and yet give him clearly to understand that he might do so, without fear of giving mortal offence to Mr Gammon.

At the moment of the reader's being reintroduced to Mr Gammon, that gentleman was sitting, about nine o'clock in the evening, at his chambers, beside a table, on which were placed a lamp, a number of papers, and coffee. In one hand he held the rough draft of his rent-charge, which had that day been sent to him by Mr Frankpledge, and he was occasionally making pencil memoranda on the margin, and sipping his coffee as he went along. He would sometimes pause, as if his thoughts wandered, his countenance looking harassed, his ample brow laden with anxiety. Certainly, great as was his energy, and clear his head, and accustomed as he was to the despatch of business of even the most difficult and varied description, all his powers were at that moment taxed to their uttermost stretch, as a hasty glance round the room would have satisfied the reader. On the sofa lay several piles of loose papers. First, there were the draft briefs—and voluminous they were—which he was now pre-

paring, or rather settling, in the following actions for bribery penalties, coming on for trial at the ensuing Yorkshire Assizes:—

- " WIGLEY v. GAMMON, (*S.J.*)" *
- " Same v. MUDFLINT, (*S.J.*)"
- " Same v. BLOODSUCK, (*S.J.*)"
- " Same v. WOODLOUSE, (*S.J.*)"

All these serious actions were being pushed forward with great vigour, at the instance of Lord De la Zouch, who had, moreover, directed them all to be made special jury causes.

Secondly, a monstrous mass of papers, also lying on the sofa, contained the heterogeneous elements, out of which it required a head as clear as Gammon's, to draw up an intelligible brief for the defence, in a complicated case of *conspiracy*—"The KING v. MIDDLETON SNAKE, and OTHERS,"—coming on for trial, at the ensuing King's Bench sittings, for London; it having been removed, on account of its difficulty and importance, by *certiorari*† from the Old Bailey. It ought to have been by this time prepared; yet Mr Gammon had scarcely even looked at the papers, though the credit of their office was at stake, as the case had attracted much public attention.

Thirdly, there were scattered about threatening masses of documents connected with the various joint-stock companies in which Mr Gammon was concerned, either openly or secretly—either professionally, or as a shareholder; the management of many of them requiring the utmost and incessant vigilance and tact. These matters, however, and many others which had accumulated, till the bare thoughts of them oppressed and distracted him, he had altogether neglected, while absorbed by the pursuit of Miss Aubrey, and the consummation of his schemes and purposes respecting Titmouse and the Yatton property. As if all this had not been sufficient occupation for him, there was yet another of a totally different description. He was writing a series of popular and powerful at-

tacks in the *Sunday Flash*, upon a certain Tory ex-Minister—in fact, an effort to write him down—and this with the privity, and even occasional assistance, of a great Whig functionary, whom Gammon intended, in due time, to make great use of, as soon as his lordship should have sufficiently committed himself thus, and otherwise. Now, Gammon had, for three weeks running, disappointed the numerous readers of the *Sunday Flash*, during which period, also, he had been almost baited to death upon the subject by old Quirk, the chief proprietor of the paper; and that very evening, the odious VIPER, its editor, had been there, as it were, writhing and hissing about him till he had given a positive pledge to prepare an article against the ensuing Saturday. All these things put together, were enough for one strong-headed man to bear up against, and Gammon felt nearly overwhelmed—so much so, as to have no little difficulty in addressing his attention to the interesting task of settling the draft of his own rent-charge on the Yatton property. He was not quite satisfied with the way in which Frankpledge had tinkered up the "*consideration*" shadowed forth in Gammon's instructions; and sketched in the margin, the outline of one compounded of a "certain sum of five thousand pounds of good and lawful money of Great Britain, by the aforesaid Oily Gammon, at or before the execution of these presents, paid to the said Tittlebat Titmouse, and the receipt whereof the said Titmouse thereby acknowledged, and from the same and every part thereof, released and discharged the said Oily Gammon, his heirs, executors, administrators and assigns" (! ! !) and also "of the great skill, and exertion, and sacrifices of the said Oily Gammon, for and on behalf of the said Tittlebat Titmouse, in and in respect of the recovery of the Yatton property," &c. &c.

He was thus engaged, when a sharp knock at his door announced the arrival of the intelligent grantor of the aforesaid annuity, Mr Titmouse himself, whose stylish cab was at that mo-

* i. e. "Special Jury." † See APPENDIX.

ment standing opposite to the entrance to Thavies' Inn, in Holborn, having brought him direct from the House of Commons; whither, however, he was to return by eleven o'clock, till which time he had paired off, in order to enable him to come and consult Mr Gammon on one or two important matters. Poor Titmouse had conceived, since his memorable interview with Gammon, formerly related, a violent hatred of him; but it was almost neutralised by fear. The sudden and serious diminution of his income by Gammon's rent-charge, almost turned his head upside down, and occasioned a pother in his little bosom, which was all the greater, for his being unable to admit any sympathising friend into his confidence. He had become excessively fidgety and irritable; his countenance and demeanour were troubled and depressed: from all which, the more intimate of his brother senators naturally inferred that he had lost large sums at play, or was harassed by election expenses; or had quarrelled with his mistress; or been found out by his wife; or been kicked, and dared not call out the aggressor; or that some other such accident had befallen him, as was likely to happen to themselves. Now, to be candid with the reader, Titmouse certainly *was* getting into rather deep water. Formidable creditors were beginning to look somewhat sternly after him, in various quarters; his upholsterer was becoming troublesome; his wine-merchant insisted on at least four hundred pounds on account; Messrs Jimcrack and Nick-nack were surprised at having received no payment for sundry expensive articles of jewellery and *vertu*. His coachmaker, his tailor, a host of household creditors, were getting very restless; he had a running account of some £600 or £800 at the *Gliddington*, in respect of his parliamentary and other dinners at that fashionable establishment; his yacht was a dreadful drain upon his resources; he had been unfortunate in his sporting speculations; in short, if Gammon had his anxieties, so had Titmouse

his. He felt himself getting terribly out at elbows—so much so, that he could no longer give that calm and undivided attention to his parliamentary duties, which his enlightened constituents had a right to expect at his hands: and in short, the sole occasion of his calling on Gammon, was to see if that gentleman could devise some mode of once more replenishing his empty coffers—a further mortgage on the Yatton property being the exact mode of doing so, which he was about to propose to Gammon.

It required some tact, however, as he felt, to broach that subject, in the present position of affairs; so he avowed that he had called to see if Mr Gammon's deeds were ready for signing—as he was anxious to get it off his mind. Time was precious with Mr Gammon: he therefore lost not a moment in plucking aside the thin disguise of Titmouse, and discovering the real object of his visit. Mr Gammon looked serious indeed, on hearing the account of Titmouse's prodigal expenditure, and remonstrated with him earnestly, and even authoritatively; but it instantly flashed across Mr Gammon's mind, that this was the very opportunity he wanted for drawing Titmouse's attention to the two promissory notes of Mr Aubrey!

"My dear Titmouse," said he, with great kindness of manner, "notwithstanding all I have felt it my duty to say, I do sincerely wish it were in my power to serve you in this emergency. But we really must spare old Yatton for a little—you've sadly burthened her already; we shall be killing the goose to get at the golden egg, if we don't mind what we're about!"

"——! But what the devil's to be done, Mr Gammon? For, 'pon my soul, I'm most particular hard up, and something must be done."

"We must bethink ourselves of our other resources, my dear Titmouse!—let us see"—he paused, with his hand resting on his forehead for a few moments—"Oh! by the way—certainly," he added suddenly—"but no! it's a thousand pities; my word is pledged."

"Eh? what? does anything strike

you, Gammon?—‘Pon my life, what is it?’” inquired Titmouse, pricking up his ears.

“Why, yes, certainly,” replied Gammon musingly—adding, as if he did not intend Titmouse to hear him, “to be sure, it would put ten thousand—nay, with the interest, nearly eleven”—

“The devil it would! *What* would? My stars, Mr Gammon!” exclaimed Titmouse eagerly—“Do tell us what it is!”

“Why, I was certainly thinking, at the moment,” replied Gammon with a sigh, “of that poor devil Aubrey’s two notes for £5000 a-piece and interest.”

Titmouse’s face suddenly fell. “Oh Lord! Is that all? Hang the fellow—he’s a beggar—squeezed dry—nothing more to be got out of him!” he exclaimed, with mingled chagrin and contempt. “A’n’t worth powder and shot! Blood from a stone!—won’t have anything worth taking this ten years to come!”

“Poor fellow!” quoth Gammon.

“Pon my soul, Gammon, it’s *me* you may say that of, I rather think!”

“Why,” said Gammon, glancing rather keenly at Titmouse, “my first and greatest duty on earth, my dear Titmouse, is to *you*—to look after, to secure your interests; and candour compels me to say, that, whatever may be my feelings towards that unfortunate person, still, I think, you’ve only to squeeze *him* pretty hard, and blood would come from other people. Eh! you understand?”

“By Jove!—Indeed!—No! But would it really? How?—Squeeze away, then, and be —! Please bring an action against the fellow, the first thing in the morning! Put him in jail, and he’ll find the money, I’ll warrant him! Dem the fellow! why don’t be pay his dechts? It’s devilish hard on me, a’n’t it? Didn’t I forgive him forty thousand pounds? By the way, I’d forgot there’s the other ten thousand that Lord De la Zouch is surely for—when do we touch that?”

“Oh! we’ve taken a bond for *that*, which will not fall due before—let me see—the 24th of next January.”

“ ‘Pon my soul, what a cursed bore! But can’t one do anything with it before then?”

“What! Sue on it before it’s due?”

“No—egad! I mean, raise the wind on it. Surely Lord De la Zouch’s name is”—

“Whew!” thought Gammon, “that stroke certainly had never occurred to me!—Ay, he’s right, the little fool! Old Fang will advance £8000 or £9000, or more even—I’ll see to it, by Jove!” Then he said aloud—“It may be possible, certainly, my dear Titmouse; but I see obstacles in the way.”

“Some cussed law point—eh?”

“Yes—but I assure you I will turn my best attention to it; and thank you for the suggestion,” he added; and proceeded to bring back Titmouse to the point at which he had started off. “And speaking of poor Aubrey—it’s certainly true that you have been, I may say, extravagantly liberal to him—forbearing beyond example; and I can’t think that any one can be expected, when he knows a waive of his hand will put some eleven thousand pounds into his pocket, to stand by idle for ever! It is not in human nature”—

“No; ‘pon my life it isn’t,” quoth Titmouse with a puzzled air, quite unable to make out whether Gammon intended to favour or discourage the notion of immediately proceeding against Aubrey. Gammon observing this, continued—“At all events I should say, that if you consider that your own necessities”—

“Demme! I should think so!” interposed Titmouse.

“Required it—and, as you properly observed, you are the best judge; certainly”—he paused; surely—thought he—Titmouse now saw his drift!

“Yes—‘pon my soul!” exclaimed Titmouse.

“Why, in that case, it is only fair to myself to say, that *I* can be no

party to it : I have had to bear enough already that was due to others ; and since I have solemnly pledged my word of honour to Mr Aubrey"—

" What the devil *do* you mean, Gammon ? Cuss me, if I can make you out a bit ! " interrupted Titmouse snappishly.

" You misunderstand me, my dear Titmouse ! Once for all, I say, if you want the money, you must immediately sue on these notes ; and my opinion is, you'll succeed—only, I must not appear in it, you know ! But if you do choose to employ some other solicitor—there's that Mr Spitfire, for instance—to compel me to give up the notes"—

" Oh Lord ! Honour ! No, no !—So bless me, Heaven ! I didn't mean anything of the kind," cried Titmouse alarmedly, fearful of offending Gammon, who could scarcely conceal his impatience and disgust at the stupidity of Titmouse.

" I cannot make you understand me, Titmouse ! What I mean is, it is my duty not to let my feelings interfere with your interests. I now, therefore, recommend you, since you have suggested the thing, immediately to put yourself into the hands, as far only as this little business is concerned, of some other solicitor, say Mr Spitfire, in Scorpion Court ; and whatever he advises you to do—*do*, without hesitation. You will probably tell him that, if he demands the two notes on your behalf, I may, for form's sake, resist ! but I know I shall be ordered to give them up ! Well—I can't help it ! "

" Honour now, Gammon ! May I do as I like ? " inquired Titmouse, stupidly and irresolutely.

" Honour ! "

" And you won't be angry ? Not a bit, eh ? "

" On my sacred word of honour ! " replied Gammon solemnly, placing his hand on his breast.

" Then fire away, Flannagan ! " cried Titmouse, joyfully snapping his fingers. " By Jove, here goes ! Here's for a jolly squeeze ! Aha ! Ten thousand drops of blood !—by Jove, he'll

bleed to death ! But, by the way, what will Mr Quirk say ? "

" Curse Mr Quirk ! " cried Gammon impatiently ; " you know the course you are to pursue—you are your own master, surely ? What has Mr Quirk to do with you, when I allow you to act in this way ? "

" To be sure ! Well ! here's a go ! Wasn't it a lucky thought of mine to come here to-night ? But don't you forget the other ten thousand—the two make twenty thousand, by Jove ! I'm set up again—aha ! And as soon as ever the House is up, if I don't cut away in my span-new yacht, with a lot of jolly chaps, to the East Indies, or some *other* place that'll take us a good six weeks, or so, to go and come back in. Hollo ! Is that eleven o'clock striking ? " he inquired with a start, taking out his watch. " It is, by Jove ! and my pair's up ; they'll be dividing—I'm off ! Good-night."

" You remember where Mr Spitfire lives ? " said Gammon anxiously. " In Scorpion Court, Strand. I must say he's one of the most respectable men in the profession ; and so quick ! "

" Ah—I remember ! I'll be with him the moment after breakfast ! " replied Titmouse : Gammon shook him by the hand—feeling, when he had shut both his doors, as if he had just got rid of an imp. " Oh, thou indefinable and undiscoverable principle regulating human affairs ! " thought he, falling into a reverie, a bitter scowl settling on his strongly-marked features ; " of what naturesoever thou art, and if any such there really be, what conceivable purpose canst thou have had in view in placing this execrable idiot and me, in our relative positions ? " He pursued this line of philosophical reflection for some time, till he had got into a far more melancholy and misanthropical humour than he had ever before fallen into—till, recollecting himself, and with a deep sigh, he rang for a fresh supply of coffee from his drowsy laundress ; and then exerted himself vigorously till nearly five o'clock in the morning, at which hour he sank, exhausted, into bed.

During the ensuing day, sure enough,

he received a communication signed “*Simeon Spitfire*,” and dated from “*Scorpion Court*,” informing him that its respectable writer “was instructed to apply to him, on the part of Mr Titmouse, for the immediate delivery up of two promissory notes for £5000 each, given by one Charles Aubrey to the aforesaid Titmouse,” and “begging Mr Gammon’s immediate attention thereto.” Gammon instantly copied out and sent an answer which he had carefully prepared beforehand—taking very high ground indeed, but slipping in, with a careful inadvertence, an encouraging admission of the strict legal right of Mr Spitfire’s client. ‘Twas, in short, a charming letter—showing its writer to be one of the most fastidiously high-minded men living; but producing not the least favourable effect upon the mind of Mr Spitfire, who instantly forwarded a formal and peremptory demand of the two documents in question. Gammon wrote a second letter, alluding to an unguarded (!) admission made in his former communication, which he devoutly hoped would not be used against him; and, in terms of touching and energetic eloquence, re-asserted that, though the letter of the law might be against him, he conceived that, in point of honour, and indeed of justice, he was warranted in adhering to the solemn promise which he had made to a gentleman for whom he entertained the most profound respect; and, in short, he flatly refused to give up the instruments demanded! Irrepressible was the exultation of Mr Spitfire, on finding himself getting so much the better of so astute a person as Mr Gammon! and he took an opportunity of showing to every one who came to his little office, how Mr Gammon had laid himself open to the superior tactics of him—the aforesaid Mr Spitfire!—He then, with profound astuteness, wrote a fine flourishing letter to wind up the correspondence, and adorn an affidavit; apprising Mr Gammon that the Court of King’s Bench would be immediately applied to, for a rule calling upon him, forthwith, to deliver up the documents in

question. On this, Mr Gammon drew up an imposing and admirable affidavit, setting forth all the correspondence; and, as soon as he had been served with the rule *nisi*, he instructed Sir Charles Wolstenholme (the late Attorney-General), Mr Sterling, and Mr Crystal, to “*show cause*” against it; knowing, of course, quite as well as did counsel, with whom he did not think it necessary to hold a consultation, for fear they should press him to give up the promissory notes without showing cause, that there was no earthly chance of successfully resisting the rule.—When he took his seat under Sir Charles, just before that learned person rose to show cause, he touched Mr Gammon on the shoulder, and warmly complimented him on the highly honourable and friendly feeling which he had manifested towards the unfortunate Mr Aubrey; but ‘feared that the case, as far as the legal merits went, was too plain for argument;—but he had looked with unusual care over the affidavits on which the rule had been obtained, and at the form of the rule itself—and rejoiced to say he felt confident that he should be able to discharge it with costs:’—at which Mr Gammon turned suddenly pale, with joyous surprise, as Sir Charles imagined; he not knowing Gammon so well as we do!—The reader is now in a position to appreciate the following report of what took place—and (*inter nos*) which said report had been drawn up for the *Morning Groul*, by Mr Gammon himself.

COURT OF KING’S BENCH. Yesterday.

(Sittings in Banco.)

Ex parte TITMOUSE, M.P.

“ This was a rule, obtained by Mr SUBTLE on a previous day of the term, calling upon Mr Gammon, of the firm of Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, of Saffron Hill, Hatton Garden, to show cause why he should not forthwith deliver up to Mr Titmouse, M.P. for Yatton, two promissory notes, each

for the payment, to that gentleman, on demand, of £5000, with interest, by Charles Aubrey. Sir CHARLES WOLSTENHOLME, Mr STERLING, and Mr CRYSTAL, now appeared to show cause—and took a preliminary objection to the form of the rule. After a lengthened discussion, the Court decided that the rule might be moulded so as to meet the facts of the case, and directed cause to be shown on the merits.

"From the affidavits filed in answer to the rule, it appeared that, shortly after the termination of the case of *Doe dem. Titmouse v. Jolter*, in which, it will be recollect, the lessor of the plaintiff succeeded in establishing his right to extensive estates in Yorkshire, Mr Gammon had been active in endeavouring to effect an amicable arrangement with the defendant in that action, concerning the mesne profits; and, after great exertions, had persuaded his client, Mr Titmouse, to enter into an agreement highly advantageous to Mr Aubrey—who was to be released, as we understood, from no less a sum than Sixty Thousand Pounds, due in respect of the mesne profits, on giving the two promissory notes which formed the subject of the present application. It further appeared, that on obtaining Mr Aubrey's signature to these promissory notes, Mr Gammon had explicitly and repeatedly assured him that he need be under no apprehension of being called on for payment of them, for several years; but that the notes should remain in the hands of Mr Gammon, and should not be put in suit till after a twelvemonth's notice should have been given to Mr Aubrey. It did not distinctly appear whether Mr Titmouse was ever made aware of this understanding between Mr Gammon and Mr Aubrey—at all events, nothing had ever passed in writing upon the subject. Mr Gammon, on the contrary, frankly admitted it to be possible that Mr Titmouse might have been under the impression, while surrendering so great a claim against Mr Aubrey, that the sum secured by the two promissory notes was to have been before this time liquidated. There was no affidavit made on the subject

by Mr Aubrey. It also appeared that Mr Titmouse had not hitherto received any portion of the large amount, £20,000, yet due in respect of the mesne profits. The affidavits read by the Attorney-General set forth a correspondence which had taken place between Mr Titmouse's solicitor and Mr Gammon, in which the latter insisted, in the most strenuous terms, upon the honourable engagement under which he conceived himself to be to Mr Aubrey, and solemnly declared his belief that Mr Aubrey was under a similar impression; at the same time, there were expressions in Mr Gammon's letters, from which it was plain that he was aware of the right, in point of strict law, of Mr Titmouse, to the documents in question. It also appeared from the affidavits of Mr Titmouse, and was not denied by those of Mr Gammon, that the former had repeatedly urged the latter to deliver up the notes, or commence proceedings against Mr Aubrey—but that Mr Gammon had, on all such occasions previous to the present one, succeeded in dissuading him from his purpose. It had, moreover, been alleged on behalf of Mr Titmouse, that Mr Gammon was acting in collusion with Mr Aubrey to defeat the just claim of Mr Titmouse; but this Sir Charles Wolstenholme indignantly disclaimed on the part of Mr Gammon, whose conduct throughout showed the nicest sense of honour, and the utmost possible anxiety to interfere between an unfortunate gentleman and utter ruin. But,

"The COURT, without calling on Mr SUBTLE (with whom were Mr Goose and Mr Mon), said the rule must be made absolute. The legal right of Mr Titmouse to the notes was admitted by Mr Gammon's own affidavit; and there was no pretence for holding that, as against Mr Titmouse, Mr Gammon, who was only one of that gentleman's attorneys, had any right to withhold the documents in question. No authority from Mr Titmouse to Mr Gammon to make the alleged representations to Mr Aubrey, had been shown, and consequently that gentleman could

in no way be bound by them. He was not even shown to have been aware of them. It was not pretended that Mr Gammon, or any of his partners, had any lien on the notes, which must be therefore given up to Mr Titmouse. With respect to the imputation against Mr Gammon, of being in collusion with Mr Aubrey, Lord Widdrington added, that from the high public character of that gentleman it was impossible for a moment to imagine him capable of anything inconsistent with the strictest honour; and Mr Gammon's conduct showed that, though mistaken as to the extent of his power over the notes intrusted to him, he had acted from the purest motives, and evinced an honourable anxiety to serve the interests of one whom he believed to be unfortunate.—The rule was then made absolute; but on Mr Subtle applying for the costs, the remainder of the day was occupied in an elaborate discussion upon the question—which, however, was eventually referred to the Master."

Nor was this all. The intelligent editor of the *Morning Growl*, happening to cast his eye over the above, while lying in proofs, made it the subject of an eloquent leading article, in which were contained many just and striking reflections on the continual inconsistency between law, as administered in England, and justice, of which the present, he said, was a glaring instance. It was truly lamentable—it seemed—to find truth and honour, generosity and justice, all sacrificed to

the wretched technicalities, the petty quirks, and quibbles, of the law—which required a radical reform. Indeed, the whole system of our jurisprudence called for the most searching revision, which, he hoped, would ere long take place. Then followed some severe animadversions upon the conduct of Lord Widdrington, in giving effect to such pettifogging subterfuges as had that day served plainly to defeat the ends of justice; and the article, hinting at the infirmities of advancing age, concluded by calling upon his lordship to resign his seat on the bench! and make way for a more liberal and enlightened successor, who would decide every case that came before him, according to the dictates of natural equity and common sense, without being trammelled by such considerations as at present fettered and impeded the due administration of justice. It did so happen, *inter nos*, that this same incompetent Lord Widdrington had called down upon himself and his court the foregoing philippic, by having imposed a smart fine upon the publisher of the *Morning Growl*, and superadded a twelvemonth's imprisonment, for an execrable libel upon an unoffending and amiable ecclesiastical dignitary; and this, too, his lordship had done, after overruling an almost interminable series of frivolous and vexatious technical objections to the proceedings, urged by the defendant's counsel, in conformity with the instructions which he had received, to take every possible advantage.

CHAPTER V.

KATE COMMUNICATES A SECRET TOLD HER BY MR GAMMON; WHO SECURES HER BROTHER A NIGHT WITH MR VICE.

At the earliest moment at which Mr Aubrey could, without suspicion, extricate himself from the embraces of his overjoyed wife, sister, and children, on his return to Vivian Street, he withdrew to his study, in order, professedly, to despatch some letters; but really to peruse the paper which had been given to him by Mr Runnington, with such ominous significance. His eye soon caught the words "*Ex parte, Titmouse, M.P.*"—and he glanced over the above report of the proceedings, with exceeding agitation. He read it over twice or thrice, and felt really sick at heart.

"Oh, unfathomable Gammon!" he exclaimed at length, aloud, laying down the paper, and sinking into his chair. "Surely I am the weakest, or you the subtlest of mankind!" He turned over in his thoughts everything that he could recollect of Gammon's conduct, from the first moment that they had met; and felt baffled and bewildered. Again he perused the report of the proceedings in the King's Bench—and would have again relapsed into thought; but his eye happened to alight on two or three notes lying on his table, where they had been placed by Fanny, having come in his absence. He opened the first listlessly, not knowing the handwriting; but, on unfolding it, started violently on recognising that of Gammon, within; and with mingled wonder and fear, read as follows:—

"THAVIES' INN.

"DEAR SIR,—Heaven only knows when or where these hasty lines will find you. I am forced to address them

to Vivian Street, being in total ignorance of your intended movements. If you have not taken my advice, and withdrawn from the kingdom, I know not what grievous indignity may have befallen you. You may have been torn from your family, and now incarcerated in prison, the victim of a cruel and inveterate rapacity. My conscience bears me witness that I can say—I can do—no more for you. I am grossly misrepresented—I am insulted, by having base and sinister motives attributed to me, for my conduct towards you, for my anxious and repeated interference on your behalf. In the *Morning Growl* of to-day you will probably see, if you have not already seen, the report of some rather expensive and oppressive proceedings against myself, yesterday, in the Court of King's Bench. It may apprise you of the last desperate stand I have made for you. It is with bitter regret—with a feeling of deep indignation, that I tell you I am unable to fulfil my solemn, deliberate, repeated promise to you concerning the two promissory notes which you deposited with me, in implicit reliance on my honour. Alas! you must prepare for the worst! Mr Titmouse and his new adviser can have, of course, but one object in requiring the surrender of the two promissory notes, which I have already been compelled to give up, under peril of an attachment for contempt of court. I have strained, God knows! every nerve on your behalf; have all but fatally quarrelled with Mr Titmouse, and with my partners; and I stand in some measure compro-

mised, by the recent proceedings, before the profession and the public—and *all in vain!* Yet, once more, if you be not blinded and infatuated beyond all example or belief, I implore you, in the name of Heaven, by every consideration that should influence a man of honour and of feeling, fly!—lose not a second after reading these lines, which I entreat you to destroy when read, or *that second* may involve your ruin—and the ruin of all connected with you! Believe me, your distressed—your unalterable friend, whatever fatally prejudiced view you may take of him,

O. G."

Mr Aubrey laid down this letter; and sinking back again into his chair, yielded for some moments to an impulse nearly akin to despair. "Oh God!" he exclaimed, pressing his hand against his aching forehead—"to what hast thou destined us, thy wretched creatures!—I am forbidden to believe—I cannot—I will not believe—that thou hast made, only to torment, us; yet, alas! my spirit is at length drooping under these accumulated evils!—Oh God! Oh God! I am blind. Give me sight, to discern thy will concerning me!—Oh give me not up to despair! *Break not the bruised reed!* *Quench not the smoking flax!*—What is to become of me? Is this man thy messenger of evil to me? Is he the subtle and vindictive fiend I fear him to be? What can be his object—his motive—for resorting to such tortuous and complicated scheming against us as must be his, if he be playing the hypocrite? Or is he really what he represents himself? And am I guilty of groundless distrust—of gross ingratitude?—What shall I think, what can I do? Oh my God, preserve my senses to me—my understanding! My brain seems reeling! My perceptions are becoming disturbed!—Perhaps this very night the frightful scene of the morning may be acted over again! again my bleeding heart be torn from those it loves—to whom thou hast united it!"—A deep sigh, or rather groan, burst from him; and leaning over the table, he buried his

face in his hands, and remained for some time in that posture.

"What am I to do?" he presently inquired, rising, and walking to and fro. "Fly—he says! Were I weak and unprincipled enough to do so, should I not, in all human probability, fall into the deepest pit he has dug for me?—but be that as it may—*fly* I will not! Never! Never! Those dear—those precious beings in yonder room"—his heart thrilled within him—"may weep, but shall never blush, for me!"

"Why—how horrid is my position!" he presently exclaimed to himself. "Ten thousand pounds and upwards, must either I pay, or Lord De la Zouch for me, within a few months;—here is a second ten thousand pounds, with nearly five hundred pounds of interest; I have been today arrested for almost fifteen hundred pounds; and this man Titmouse holds my bond for two thousand pounds more, and interest! Is it, then, thy will, O God! that I am to sink beneath my troubles? Am I to perish from thy sight? To be crushed beneath thy displeasure?—Or, merciful Father!—wilt Thou save me, when there is none other to help? Let me but see that the rod is in Thy fatherly hand, and I will humbly kiss it!"

Calmness seemed stealing insensibly over his troubled spirit; his agitated feelings sank gradually into an indescribable and wonderful repose; in that dismal moment of extreme suffering, his soul became blessedly sensible of its personal relationship to God;—that he was not the miserable victim of *chance*—as the busy spirit of darkness incessantly whispered in his ear—but in the hands of the *Father of the spirits of all flesh*, who listened, in his behalf, to the pleading of One touched with the feeling of our infirmities—who was in all points tempted, even as we are. His fainting spirit felt sustained by the grace for which it had sought; the oil and balm of a sound Scriptural consolation, were poured into his quivering wounds. Before his quickened eye arose many bright figures of those who had glo-

riously overcome the fiercest assaults of the Evil One, resisting even unto death :—he felt for a moment *compassed about by a great cloud of witnesses* to the mercy and goodness of God. Oh, in that sublime moment, how little seemed the sorrows which had before appeared so great ! He felt, in a manner, at once humbled and exalted. Invisible support clung to his confident soul—as if he were surrounded by the arm of Him who will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able ; but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it. He sank silently upon his knees ; and with clasped hands, and his face raised towards Heaven, with profound contrition of spirit, yet with firm faith, besought the mercy which God has promised to those who thus will ask for it. Thus, in communion with his Maker, he did not perceive the door gently opened, and by Mrs Aubrey—who, closing it hastily after her, flung her arm round his neck, sinking down beside him, and in a low, fond voice, exclaimed—“Oh, my own love ! My own Charles ! My poor, oppressed, persecuted, heart-broken husband ! Pray for me—me also !” He gently returned her embrace, looking at her unutterable things ; and after they had remained thus for a few moments, they arose. He gazed at her with unspeakable tenderness, and a countenance full of serenity.

O, Suffering ! thou art the rough but only soil in which grows the sweet flower, Resignation !

Mr Aubrey gently soothed her agitated feelings, and succeeded in communicating to her a measure of the composure which he experienced himself. Before they had quitted that little room, he had even apprised her, faithfully, of the peril which momentarily menaced them—and again the cold waters gushed over her soul. At length, however, she had recovered her self-possession sufficiently to return to the room she had quitted, and instantly blanched Miss Aubrey’s cheek by communicating the new terrors which threatened them.

Just as they were finishing dinner—a mere mockery of a meal—a double knock at the door occasioned them all not a little agitation ; but, as the event proved, needlessly, since it announced the arrival of only their kind experienced friend, Mr Runnington—who evidently felt infinitely relieved at finding that Mrs Aubrey and Kate had been made acquainted by Mr Aubrey with the additional source of apprehension afforded by the report of the preceding day’s doings in the King’s Bench. Mr Runnington felt assured that within twenty-four hours’ time, proceedings would be taken against Mr Aubrey ! whom, he reminded, that as in the former, so in the anticipated case, the extent of his immediate anxiety would be the finding bail for so serious an amount ; but that difficulty surmounted, he would be safe from personal annoyance and apprehension till the ensuing November. Mr Aubrey then apprised Mr Runnington of the death of Lady Stratton, and the grievous events connected with it, amidst the tears and sobs of Mrs Aubrey and Kate. Though he said but little, his countenance showed how much he was shocked by the intelligence. “Never in my experience,” at length he observed, “a thirty-six years’ experience in the profession, have I heard of, or met with, such a case of complicated misfortune as yours ! ‘But it is,’ as the old proverb has it, ‘a long lane that has no turning.’ We must trust, my dear sir, to the chapter of accidents !”

“Oh, Mr Runnington !” interrupted Aubrey with vivacity, “there is no such thing ! It is the order of Providence !” They then entered into a long conversation ; in the course of which—“If our fears, our worst fears, be confirmed,” observed Runnington, “and they really venture to put in suit these two notes, then they will have thrown down the gauntlet. I’ll take it up—and there’s no knowing what may happen when we come to close quarters. First and foremost, I’ll tax away every farthing of the alleged ‘balance’ of their monstrous bill—ay, I’ll stake my reputation on it, that I

leave them not a shilling; but, on the contrary, prove that you have already greatly overpaid them."

"Alas! but have I not pledged myself to Mr Gammon not to do so?" interrupted Aubrey.

"Pshaw!—Forgive me, but this is absurd. Indeed, Mr Aubrey, it is really out-heroding Herod! All is fair against adversaries such as these! Besides, if you must be so scrupulous and fastidious—and I honour you for it—there's another way of putting it, which I fancy settles the matter. By Mr Titmouse now putting these bills in suit, Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap's promise to you is not performed—it is broken; and so there is an end of yours, which is dependent upon the performance of theirs."

"That is only on the supposition that they are playing me false—whereas the proceedings yesterday in court, especially when coupled with Mr Gammon's letters to me"—

"All hollow! hollow!" replied Mr Runnington, shaking his head.—False and hypocritical! Who could trust to *Gammon*? This fellow Titmouse, whom they are doubtless fleecing daily, is, in all probability, desperately driven for ready money; and they have allowed him to get hold of these two bills, after a sham resistance on the part of Gammon, in order to call forward your friends to the rescue—that's their game, depend upon it!" Mr Aubrey fired at the bare thought. "Yet I must own I am at a loss to discover what motive or object Mr Gammon can have for going so far out of his way to secure your good opinion, or for wrapping himself in so impenetrable a disguise. He is, to use plain language, a very, very deep devil, that Gammon; and, depend upon it, has some sinister purpose to effect, which you will by-and-by discover!" Mr Aubrey then, for the first time, acquainted Mr Runnington with Gammon's recent proposals to Miss Aubrey, at which Mr Runnington seemed for some moments struck dumb with astonishment.

"I presume," at length said he, turning with a brief and sad smile

towards Miss Aubrey, whose reddening cheek betokened the interest she felt in the conversation—"I presume, Miss Aubrey, there is no chance of our seeing you pass into—Mrs Gammon?"

"I should rather think not, Mr Runnington," she replied, with sufficient loftiness of manner; "and I am quite at a loss to conceive what could possibly have put such a thing into the man's head."

"Certainly, Mr Runnington," said Aubrey, "I can undertake to say that my sister never gave him any encouragement."

"Encouragement?—Horrid man!" exclaimed Miss Aubrey with great vivacity. "I could never endure him—you know it, Charles—so do you, Agnes!" Mr Runnington made no further observation on the subject, though his thoughts were busy. He was satisfied that he was beginning to discover a clue to much of Gammon's conduct—for that that gentleman was acting with profound duplicity, Mr Runnington entertained no doubt whatever; and he resolved to watch his every motion connected with Mr Aubrey closely.

"What will be the earliest period," inquired Mr Aubrey, "at which Mr Titmouse, if so disposed, can put in suit my bond given to the late Lady Stratton?"

"As soon as he has obtained the grant of letters of administration, which cannot take place till the end of fourteen days from her ladyship's death—that being one difference, as you are aware, between the powers of an executor and an administrator." Mr Aubrey sighed, and made no reply; while Mr Runnington looked at him for some moments in silence, as if doubting whether to mention something which had occurred to him. At length—"Of course, Mr Aubrey," he commenced, "one does not like to raise groundless hopes or fears; but, do you know, I am not free from doubts as to the reality of Lady Stratton's intestacy—whether the draft of her proposed will, brought to her by Mr Parkinson, could not be admitted

to probate. Very nice questions, as you must be aware, often arise out of cases like these ! Since seeing you this morning, I have written off to Mr Parkinson for full and accurate information on the point; and if I get a satisfactory answer, with your consent I will certainly lodge a *caveat* against the grant of letters of administration. That would indeed checkmate them ! But I have slight hopes indeed of receiving such an answer as one could wish," added Mr Runnington, fearful of exciting fruitless expectations. Shortly afterwards, Miss Aubrey, who had appeared for some little time labouring under considerable excitement, addressing her brother, said, with evident embarrassment—"Charles, I am anxious to mention something that has occurred to me of a singular nature—if you think I am at liberty to do so ; and I shall first ask you and Mr Runnington, whether, under the circumstances, you consider me entitled to disclose what I allude to."

"Kate, Kate!—what is this?—What do you mean? You quite alarm me!" inquired her brother with an amazed air.

"Suppose Mr Gammon, on the occasion of his so impudently calling upon me, volunteered a statement of a very extraordinary description—one that has ever since quite haunted me, day and night: Mind, Charles—I say that, in the first instance, he volunteered it, only expressing an earnest wish that I should mention it to no one ; on which I said I should make no promise, but act as I might think proper; and after my saying this, he made the communication I allude to. *Should I be at liberty?*" continued Miss Aubrey eagerly and anxiously, "now to disclose what he told me? I am dying to do it, if I may, honourably."

"My dear Kate, I really fear your wits are wandering—that you are overcome with the sufferings you have gone through to-day," said her brother tenderly, and with infinite concern.

"Indeed, Charles, I am not," she answered with great earnestness.

"Then I am of opinion that you are at liberty, unquestionably, to mention

anything so communicated to you—I have no doubt, Kate."

"Nor I, Miss Aubrey," added Mr Runnington eagerly; "nay, I go further—with a man like him, I think it is your sacred *duty* to disclose anything he may have said to you.

Miss Aubrey paused for a few moments, and then mentioned Mr Gammon's distinct and solemn assurance to her, that he possessed the power of restoring her brother to the possession of Yatton ; and that, too, by legal and honourable means ; and that, if she would but promise to receive him as her suitor, he would pledge himself to replace them all at Yatton before claiming the performance of that promise.

Mr Aubrey, Mrs Aubrey, and Mr Runnington, all listened to this strange story in silence, and gazed in astonishment at the beautiful and excited speaker.

"Forgive me, dear madam," said Mr Runnington at length, exchanging an incredulous glance with her brother, "if I—I—express a doubt whether you may not be labouring under a complete misconception"—

"Tis impossible, Kate!" added her brother; but he knew, at the same time, his sister's strong sense; and all doubt vanished both from his mind and that of Mr Runnington on her calmly and distinctly repeating what she had just said—giving even the very expressions made use of by Mr Gammon, and which, she said, they might easily believe, had made too deep an impression on her mind to be easily obliterated.

"It's inconceivable!" exclaimed her brother, after a long pause.

"It's an audacious and cruel falsehood, in my opinion," said Mr Runnington : and all again were silent. Then he hastily ran his mind's eye over the main points in the whole course of the proceedings by which Mr Aubrey had been ejected from Yatton. "Either," he presently continued, "he is a gross liar, or is labouring under insanity, or there has been atrocious villainy practised against you. If he be in his senses,

and speaking the truth — gracious Heaven ! he must have brought forward a series of perjured witnesses, at the trial. His entire case must be a foul mass of perjury ! ”

“ Did he drop any hint, Kate, as to the means by which he could bring about such a result ? ” inquired her brother after a long pause, during which he too had been, like Mr Runnington, reflecting on the course of proof by which the case of Titmouse had been supported.

“ No—not the remotest ; of that I am certain. I observed that particularly ; though shortly afterwards I was so overcome by what he had said, and also by the manner in which he said it, that I fainted ; Mr Gammon must have carried me to the sofa ; for when I revived, I was lying there—though, when I felt myself losing my consciousness, I was standing near the window, which I had risen to open.”

“ It’s the most amazing thing I ever heard in my life, I protest ! ” exclaimed Mr Runnington thoughtfully : while Mr Aubrey rose from his chair, and walked a few steps to and fro, obviously labouring under much excitement.

“ Kate, Kate ! ” said he, rather vehemently, “ you should have told me this the instant that you next saw me ! ”

“ For Heaven’s sake, be calm, dearest Charles ! ” cried Mrs Aubrey, herself not a little agitated by the extraordinary intelligence just communicated by Kate, for the first time, even to her. Poor Kate, on seeing the way in which her communication had been received, began to regret having mentioned the matter.

“ It will require great consideration, Mr Aubrey, to know how to deal with this strange matter, and with Gammon,” said Mr Runnington. “ I am inclined to think, at present, that he would hardly have ventured on so outrageous a piece of folly, as making such a representation as this, had there been no foundation for it in fact ; and yet, I am astonished that a man so acute, so signally self-pos-

sessed, should have so committed himself—he must have been under great excitement at the moment—and indeed,” he suddenly added, “ no doubt he was ! ”

“ He certainly was, or at least seemed, a good deal agitated while he was here,” quoth Kate, colouring a little.

“ That is highly probable, Miss Aubrey,” replied Mr Runnington with a faint smile. “ It must have appeared to him as one of the most likely occurrences, that Miss Aubrey should mention to you, Mr Aubrey, so extraordinary a circumstance ! It is exceedingly difficult to imagine Mr Gammon thrown off his guard on any occasion.” Then ensued an anxious and prolonged conversation on the subject, in which many conjectures were made, but without leading to any satisfactory issue. Quite a new light, however, seemed now thrown upon all Mr Gammon’s past acts, and the whole tenor of his conduct. They read over his last two notes with new and deep interest, on the supposition that, while writing them, he was conscious of possessing the power which he had represented. All was mystery. Then was discussed the question, as to the propriety of either Mr Runnington or Mr Aubrey applying to Mr Gammon upon the subject—a step which was, however, postponed for future and more mature consideration. Another thing suggested itself to Mr Aubrey, but he kept it to himself :—should he forthwith apprise Mr Gammon of the fact that Kate was absolutely engaged to Mr Delamere, and so at once and for ever extinguish all hope on the part of Mr Gammon ?

The evening, however, was now advancing, and Mr Runnington pressed upon Mr Aubrey the object which he had chiefly had in view in calling—viz. to prevail on Mrs Aubrey and himself to accompany him immediately to his country house, which lay in the direction of Richmond, at about six miles’ distance from town ; and where, for a brief interval, they might enjoy a respite from the fearful suspense and danger to which they

were at present exposed in Vivian Street. Mrs Aubrey and Kate earnestly seconded the kind importunities of Mr Runnington ; and after considerable hesitation, Mr Aubrey consented. It was accordingly arranged that, Mr Runnington's carriage not being in town, he should return, within an hour, with a hired one ; and that, during the ensuing day, Mrs Runnington should drive to town for the purpose of bringing back with her Kate, and little Charles and Agnes. This having been determined upon, Mr Runnington left, promising to return within an hour, when he hoped to find Mr and Mrs Aubrey ready to start, and equipped for a several days' sojourn. As soon as he had left the house, Mr Aubrey's scruples began to revive : it appeared to him, that though it might be for a short time only, still it was, in effect, an absconding from his creditors : and there is no knowing but that his fastidious misgivings, his delicate sense of rectitude, might have led him after all to send off Mrs Aubrey alone, when, poor soul ! he was spared the trial of his conscientiousness, by an incident which occurred about half an hour after Mr Runnington's departure. Mrs Aubrey was sitting in the parlour, in travelling dress, fondling little Agnes, and talking earnestly to Kate about the management of the two children, and other matters ; while Mr Aubrey, also ready to start, was in the study, selecting a book or two to take with him, when a heavy single knock at the door, unaccompanied by the sound of coach-wheels, nearly paralysed all three of them. Why should the reader's feelings be agonised by details ? Suffice it to say, that within a few minutes' time, the wretched and almost heart-broken Aubrey was a second time in custody, and at the suit of Tittlehat Titmouse, Esq., M.P., for the principal sum of ten thousand pounds, and interest for twelve months, at the rate of five pounds *per centum per annum* ! The two minions of the law into whose hands the unfortunate Aubrey had now fallen, seemed

totally indifferent to the anguish they witnessed. The chief was a well-known sheriff - officer — one VICE ; short, fat, bloated, bull-necked ; deeply pitted with the small-pox ; close-cut black hair, almost as coarse as that of a hog ; while the expression of his features was at once callous and insolent. Aubrey perceived, at a glance, that he had no consideration or mercy to expect at the hands of such a man as this ; and the follower closely resembled his master.

" You're in my custody, sir," said Vice, walking up to Aubrey, and with an air of matter-of-fact brutality taking hold of his collar with one hand, while in the other he held out his warrant. " If you like to clap a great-coat on, as it's getting late, you may ; but the sooner you're off, out of the way of all this here noise, the better — I should say."

" For God's sake wait for a few minutes—I have a friend coming," said Aubrey, his wife clinging to his arm.

" D—d if I wait a moment, that's flat !" quoth Vice, glancing at the two boxes in the passage, and guessing from them, and the travelling dress of Mrs Aubrey, that he had luckily arrived just in the nick of time to prevent an escape.

" For the love of Heaven, stay only five minutes !" cried Kate, passionately wringing her hands — but she might as well have addressed a blacksmith's anvil, as either of the men who were now masters of her doomed brother's person.

" 'Tis useless, Kate—'tis in vain, my love !" said he, with a melancholy air ; and turning to Vice, who, with his companion, stood at only a few inches' distance from him—" perhaps you will allow me to write down the address of the place you are taking me to ?" he inquired, somewhat sternly.

" Write away then, and make haste ; for, write or not write, you're off in two minutes' time ! "

Mr Aubrey hastily wrote down in pencil, for Mr Runnington, " VICE—Squeezum Court, Carey Street, Lincoln's-Inn Fields ; " and then, having hastily drawn on his great-coat—

without taking with him even a change of linen—for Vice would seem to have got the idea of a rescue into his head, and was, besides, anxious to run not the least risk with a *ten thousand pounds' debtor*—tore himself from the frenzied embrace of his wife and sister, and quitted the house. Vice had refused even to let his man go in quest of a hackney coach, or to wait while Fanny ran for one; and the moment they had got into the street, the cries of Mrs Aubrey and Kate yet ringing in Mr Aubrey's ears, Vice put his arm with rough familiarity into that of Mr Aubrey, directing his follower to do the same: and positively, in this ruffianly style, they hurried Mr Aubrey along the whole of the distance between Vivian Street and Squeezum Court; he uttering not one word, but his heart almost bursting. Vice had received his instructions from Mr Spitfire, who was a dashing little practitioner; and perfectly well knowing the value of every day towards the close of term, had got his affidavit of debt prepared, and ready sworn, and everything in readiness, even before the rule had been made absolute against Mr Gammon. As the two burly captors, and their prize, passed, at a smart pace, along the streets, they attracted considerable attention; now and then, even a little crowd would follow them for some distance! Once Mr Aubrey caught the words—"Poor fellow! Forgery, no doubt—he's a dead man in a month!"*

Vice's lock-up was, though similar in its general appearance, yet of a much inferior description to that of Grab. It was smaller and meaner. They reached it a little after eight o'clock.

"Parlour, or common room?" inquired Vice roughly, as soon as they had entered the house.

"Which you please," replied Aubrey, quickly and gloomily.

"Pr'aps you'd better show the gemman up-stairs," said the follower hesitatingly, to his master.

"You pay extra up-stairs," quoth Vice; "which d'ye want?"

"I have no money, sir, to spare—I know the extortionating practices which"—

"Oh, come along then!" replied Vice insolently; and, in a minute or two, Mr Aubrey found himself in a tolerably large, but low room, at the back of the house, lit by three or four candles. There were some ten or twelve persons in it, smoking, drinking, reading the newspapers, playing at cards, dice, pitch-farthing, and so forth. All seemed in good spirits, and suspended, for a moment, their various occupations to scrutinise the new-comer—on whom the door was in a twinkling closed and locked.

"Now, sir! Just in time to cut in," said a thin pale man, his breath redolent of gin, stepping briskly up to him from a table, at which he and two others had just begun to play a rubber. "Now, sir," he continued, in a confident tone, running the edges of the cards rapidly through his fingers, with the air of an adept, and then proffering the pack to Mr Aubrey.

"I do not play, sir," replied Aubrey in a low tone.

"Better take a card—drive dull care away; you'll be devilish dull here without play of some sort!"

"I do not play, sir—I certainly shall not," repeated Mr Aubrey peremptorily.

"Only sixpenny points!—Can't hurt you," he continued flippantly; till Mr Aubrey walked from him with an air of disgust, towards another part of the room.

"You're a liar!" said one of two men playing at draughts, to the other, a dispute having arisen about the game, as Mr Aubrey passed them.

"And you're a cheat!" was the answer; on which the man so addressed suddenly and violently flung a half-emptied tumbler of brandy-and-water at the other. The missile took effect on the forehead of his companion, who fell stunned from his chair, his forehead, which had been cut open, bleeding profusely. On this there was a general rush towards

* See APPENDIX.

the spot, with loud cries for help. In the midst of this sickening scene, the door was opened by Vice.

"Hollo—what's the matter?" said he, locking the door after him, and coming up to the group round the fallen and miserable man who had been struck.

"Who did it?" cried he fiercely, on catching sight of the prostrate man.

"I did," sullenly answered the perpetrator of the outrage. "He called me a cheat."

"*You did!*" quoth Vice, suddenly grasping him by the collar, as with the hand of a giant, and forcing him, despite his struggling, down to the floor, when he put one knee on his breast, and then shook him till he began to get black in the face.

"D—n it, Vice, don't *murder* him!" cried one of the bystanders, all of whom seemed disposed to interfere violently; but at this point, the man who had been struck, and had been lying for some minutes motionless, suddenly began to dash about his arms and legs convulsively, for he had fallen into a fit of epilepsy. The attention of all present was now absorbed by this one dreadful figure; and the man whom Vice had quitted, rose flushed and breathless from the floor, and looked with a face of horror upon the victim of his ungovernable passions.

"I must get a doctor," quoth Vice, "presently," approaching the door; and in passing Mr Aubrey, who sat down looking exceedingly agitated—"Oh—here you are!" said he: "come you along with me."

"I hope this poor man will be properly attended to"—interposed Mr Aubrey, anxiously.

"That's *my* look-out, not yours," replied Vice rudely—"come you along with me, I tell you!" and, unlocking the door, he motioned out Mr Aubrey; and, after sending off a man for a surgeon, led Mr Aubrey into a kind of office—where his hands were instantly grasped by those of Mr Runnington, who had been there some five minutes. He appeared an angel, in the eyes of

Mr Aubrey, who returned his cordial pressure with convulsive energy, but in silence, for his shocked and overcharged feelings forbade him utterance. Mr Runnington looked both annoyed and distressed—for Vice had refused to discharge his prisoner on Mr Runnington's undertaking, telling him the sum was a trifle too large for running any risk; and, in short, he peremptorily refused to do it without a written authority from the undersheriff; and added, he knew it was useless for Mr Runnington to make the application—for they had only a few months before been "let in" for eight hundred pounds in that same way—so that Mr Runnington had better, said Vice, be looking after a good bail-bond. In a word, Vice was inexorable; and a hint of the possibility of Mr Aubrey's flight to the Continent, dropped by Mr Spitfire to the under-sheriff, had caused that functionary to advise Vice "to look sharp after his bird."

"At all events let Mr Aubrey be shown into your parlour, Vice," said Mr Runnington, "and I will settle with you when I return. I am just going to the office, to see what I can do with Mr Ridley."

"It's no manner of use; and besides, it's ten to one you don't catch him—he's gone to Clapham by this time," said Vice, looking up at the dusky Dutch clock over the fireplace. But Mr Runnington was not to be so easily discouraged, and started off on his friendly errand; on which Vice led Mr Aubrey up-stairs into his "parlour," telling him, as they went along, that there were only two other "gentlemen" there, and so "them three could make it comfortable to one another, if they liked." Vice added, that as he had only one double-bedded room at liberty, they must agree among themselves which should sleep on the sofa—or perhaps take it by turns.

On entering the parlour two figures were visible; one that of a tall, pale, emaciated, gentlemanly person of about forty, who lay on the sofa languidly smoking a cigar, more ap-

parently to assuage pain than for the purpose of mere enjoyment. The other was a portly greyhaired man, apparently about fifty, and also of gentlemanly appearance. He was standing with his back to the fireplace—one hand thrust into his waist-coat, and the other holding a tumbler, which he raised to his lips, as Vice entered, and having drained it, requested him to replenish it. "Twas the third tumbler of strong brandy-and-water which he had despatched that evening; and his restless and excited eye, and voluble utterance, testified to the influence of what he had been drinking. On Vice's retiring, this gentleman began to address Mr Aubrey in a rapid and somewhat incoherent strain—telling him of the "accident" which had that morning befallen him; for that Vice had laid his rough hand upon him, just as he was embarking in an Indiaman, off Blackwall, to bid farewell to this "cursed country" for ever. This man had been a thriving merchant in the city; and, for a series of years, universally respected. He had married a fashionable wife; and their ambition and absurd extravagance, combined with losses, originating in a want of confidence in him, on the part of his mercantile connections, from his ostentation, irregularities, and inattention to business, drove him to gambling speculations. Unfortunate there, he took to courses of downright dishonesty; availing himself of his character and power as trustee, executor, and otherwise, to draw out of the funds, from time to time, large sums of money, to the utter ruin of ten or twelve unfortunate families, whose deceased relatives had quitted life with implicit confidence in his integrity! The guilty splendour thus secured him, lasted for some few years, when an accident set him suddenly wrong;—a beautiful girl, for whom he was sole trustee, and every farthing of whose fortune he had appropriated to his own purposes, applied to him for the immediate settlement of her property. The next morning he had stopped payment; Mincing Lane

was in a ferment. Astonishment prevailed at the Exchange. Who could have thought it? asked everybody. In a trice, he was nowhere to be seen or heard of, but at length intelligence of his movements having been obtained by one of his numerous distracted victims, led to his apprehension in the way which has been already mentioned. Of all this, Mr Aubrey, of course, knew nothing—but, nevertheless, he was somewhat struck with the man's countenance and manner. With what awful interest would Mr Aubrey have regarded him, had he known that the miserable being before him was then determined upon self-destruction—and that within two days' time he would actually accomplish his frightful purpose!—For he was found in bed, a ghastly object,—his head almost severed from his body.

In the other—a ruined young man of birth and station—Mr Aubrey was infinitely shocked at presently recognising the features of one whom he had slightly known at Oxford. This was a member of an ancient and honourable family, and born to a very large fortune, which he had totally dissipated in every conceivable mode of extravagance and profligacy, both at home and abroad, and moreover, in doing so, had also ruined his constitution. He had taken honours at Oxford, and was expected to have become eminent in parliament. At college, however, his tendency to profligacy rapidly developed itself. He became notorious for his debaucheries, and made ostentation of his infidelity. He had returned from France only a few days before, in an advanced stage of consumption; and having been pounced upon by one of his numerous infuriate creditors, hither he had been brought the evening before—and would be the next morning lodged in the Fleet, as he could procure no bail; and there he might, possibly, live till he could apply to take the benefit of the insolvent act. Even if he should be successful in this last stroke, he could not possibly survive it beyond a few weeks! And he had nothing then to look forward

to, but a pauper's burial—for his family had long sternly discarded him.—He at length recognised Mr Aubrey; and raising himself up on the sofa, extended his wasted hand to his fellow-collegian, who shook it kindly—much shocked at his appearance. What a marvellous difference between the characters of these two men!

After about half an hour's absence, Mr Runnington returned, much dispirited. Mr Ridley was not to be found; and, consequently, Mr Aubrey must remain in his wretched quarters all night, and till probably an advanced period of the ensuing day—till, in short, Mr Runnington should have obtained responsible sureties for his putting in bail to the action.* Having whispered a few words to Mr Aubrey in the adjoining room, and slipped a five-pound note into his hand, Mr Runnington took his leave, pledging himself to lose not a moment in procuring his release; and charged with innumerable fond expressions to Mrs Aubrey, to Kate, and his children—whom Mr Runnington promised to see that night. "This is almost the bitterest moment of my life," faltered

* See APPENDIX.

poor Aubrey; "it is indeed very hard to bear!" and he wrung Mr Runnington's hand—that gentleman being almost as much affected as his unfortunate client; who, however, on being left by Mr Runnington, felt grateful indeed to the Almighty for so powerful and valuable a friend.

Neither Mr Aubrey nor Mr Somerville—that was the name of his early acquaintance—quitted the sitting-room, during the whole of the night; but as their companion retired early to the adjoining apartment, and immediately fell into heavy sleep, they at length entered into conversation—of a melancholy, but deeply interesting, and I may even add instructive character. Mr Aubrey's notes of it are by me; but I will not risk fatiguing the indulgent reader's attention. When the chill grey morning broke, it found the two prisoners still earnestly talking together; but, shortly afterwards, nature yielded, and they both fell asleep—Mr Aubrey, with an humble and fervent inward prayer, commanding those dear beings who were absent to the protection of Heaven, and imploring it also for himself.

CHAPTER VI.

KATE'S DIAMOND NECKLACE; MR RUNNINGTON'S MUNIFICENCE; LADY STRATTON'S £15,000 POLICY, WHICH GAMMON ANGLES FOR.

IMMEDIATELY on quitting Mr Aubrey, Mr Runnington, according to his promise, went direct to Vivian Street, and the scene which he had endeavoured to prepare himself for encountering, on their finding him return unaccompanied by Mr Aubrey, was heart-rending. Alas! how confidently had they reckoned upon an issue similar to that which had so happily occurred in the morning!—Twas the first time—the

very first time—since their troubles, that Mr and Mrs Aubrey had been separated for one single night! And he was now the inmate of a prison, perhaps enduring indignity, and grievous discomfort, to aggravate his mental sufferings. Ah, how he would be thinking of those from whom he had been so cruelly separated! Mrs Aubrey and Kate sat up the livelong night—one memorable and miserable

to them—counting hour after hour, as its flight was announced by the neighbouring church-clock. Their eyes were swollen with weeping, and their throbbing temples ached, as at the first glimpse of dull daybreak, they drew aside the parlour curtain and threw open the window. They were, indeed, with some of old, *weary of watching*.

About mid-day, thanks to the energetic friendship of Mr Runnington, and the promptitude of those whose names had been given to him by Mr Aubrey, he made his appearance in Vivian Street. He saw Mrs Aubrey and Kate as he passed, sitting at the window, anxiously on the look-out. They also saw him—sprang to the door—and opening it while he was in the act of knocking, were instantly locked in each other's embrace. He looked pale and harassed, certainly; but, 'twas *he*, the beloved husband and brother—Providence had permitted them once more to meet! All their recent pangs were for a moment forgotten, and drowned in the overflowing joy of such a reunion. He was already sufficiently subdued; but when he heard the footsteps of his children pattering rapidly down stairs, and heard their little voices continually, and in eager accents, exclaiming, "Papa!—my papa!—where is papa?"—and when they ran up to him, and he felt their little arms round his neck, then he was overpowered, his lip quivered convulsively, and he could not refrain from bursting into tears. Oh, 'twas HOME, poor oppressed soul!—after all—to which Providence had permitted him to return, and where he saw himself suddenly surrounded by those precious objects of his undivided and unutterable love! Indeed, he was thankful; his heart—all their hearts—overflowed with gratitude.

Towards the evening, they received a visit from Mr and Mrs Neville, who were infinitely shocked on hearing of the events of the last few days, and of which they had not had the slightest intimation, living, as they did, at

so great a distance, and not having seen their friends the Aubreys for several weeks. Poor souls! they also had their troubles! 'Twas wonderful how they contrived to exist upon the paltry pittance obtained by his ministerial duties; but they came ever with cheerfulness—unaffected and refreshing cheerfulness; they never uttered a murmur at the thorny desert which life seemed destined to prove to them, but had always a comfortable word for their weary fellow-pilgrims. Grievous as was the position of the Aubreys, and disheartening that of their visitors, what a happy evening they passed together! Poor Neville was in high spirits; for an article of his, full of research, and delicate and just criticism, which had cost him a great deal of labour to prepare, had at length been accepted by the editor of a classical and ecclesiastical Review, who forwarded to him a check for ten guineas. Mr Aubrey could scarce refrain from tears, when his simple-minded and generous friend pressed upon him the acceptance of, at least, the half of these unexpected proceeds of his severe and ill-requited toil. While thus sitting together, in eager and delightful conversation, there came a knock to the door, which, as may be easily believed, a little disturbed them all; but it proved to be a gentleman who asked for Miss Aubrey; and on her requesting him, with a trepidation which was contagious, to come forward, who should it be, but the "gentleman" of my Lord De la Zouch; and while the colour mounted into her cheek, and her heart fluttered, he placed in her hands a packet, just arrived from the Continent, and which he said he had had strict orders to deliver, himself, into the hands of Miss Aubrey.

They all insisted on having it opened then and there; and in a few minutes' time, behold! their eager admiring eyes were dazzled by the sight of a superb diamond necklace; and at the bottom of the case, snugly nestled in the snowy wool, was a small card—which Kate, blushing violently, thrust

into her bosom, in spite of all Mrs Aubrey's efforts. There was also a long letter addressed to Mr Aubrey, from Lord De la Zouch, who, with Lady De la Zouch, had been for some weeks at Paris—and one from her ladyship to Kate; and, from its bulky appearance, 'twas evident either that Lady De la Zouch must have written her a prodigiously long letter, or enclosed one to her from—some one else. They saw Kate's uneasiness about this same letter, and considerably forbore to rally her upon it. Poor girl!—she burst into tears when she looked at the glittering trinket which had been presented to her—and reflected that its cost would probably be more than would suffice to support her brother and his family for perhaps years! Her heart yearned towards them, and she longed to convert her splendid present into a form that should minister to their necessities. While touching upon this part of my history—which I always approach with diffident reluctance, as matter too delicate to be handled before the public—I must nevertheless pause for a moment, and apprise the reader of one or two little circumstances, before returning to the main course of the narrative.

Mr Delamere was at that moment at Rome, in the course of making the usual tour of Europe, and was not expected to return to England for some months—perhaps for a year. But before quitting England, he had laid close siege to our beautiful Kate; and had succeeded, at length, in wringing from her a promise, that if ever she became any one's wife, it should be his. That their engagement was sanctioned cordially by Lord and Lady De la Zouch—two persons of as generous and noble a spirit as breathed in the world—must have been long ago abundantly manifest to the reader; and they did not the less appreciate the prize secured by their son because of the proud and delicate sense which Kate manifested, of the trying position in which she stood with relation to them. Her own notion upon the subject was somewhat indefinite: she having resolved not to

listen to any proposal for a union with Delamere, until her unfortunate brother's affairs had assumed a more cheering and satisfactory aspect; and that might not be for some—nay perhaps many—years to come. If she replied to the letter from Delamere, enclosed by Lady De la Zouch, and reply she must, to acknowledge his brilliant present, it would be the first letter she had ever written to him—a circumstance which will account, in a measure, for her exquisite embarrassment. And although all of them kept up a correspondence with Lord and Lady De la Zouch, they never, from obvious considerations of delicacy and pride, intimated the dreadful pressure which they were beginning daily to experience. Lord De la Zouch entertained an idea, on the contrary, that Mr Aubrey was struggling, it might be slowly, but still successfully, with his difficulties; and his lordship had made up his mind to pay, when called upon—and almost as a matter of course—the amount of the bond into which he had entered on Aubrey's behalf. As Aubrey desired evidently to maintain a reserve upon the subject of his private affairs, Lord De la Zouch, whatever might be at any time his anxiety and misgivings, forbore to press his inquiries. How little, therefore, were any of these noble persons aware of the position in which their packet would find the Aubreys!

Within a few days, Mr Runnington, by duly completing special bail, in the two actions of *Quirk and Others v. Aubrey*, and *Titmouse v. Aubrey*, had relieved the harassed defendant from all source of immediate personal apprehension for several months to come; and on quitting Vivian Street, one evening, after announcing this satisfactory result of his labours, he slipped into Mr Aubrey's hand, as he took leave of him at the door, a letter, which he desired Mr Aubrey to read, and if he thought it worth while, to answer—at his leisure. Guess the emotions with which he perused the following:—

“LINCOLN'S INN.
“MY DEAR SIR,—You have once or

twice, lately, been so kind as to express yourself obliged by the little professional services which I have recently had the painful satisfaction of rendering you, in the ordinary course of practice. Permit me, in my turn, then, to ask a great favour of you; and, knowing your refined sensibility, I make the request with some little apprehension, lest I should in any way wound it. I earnestly beg that you will accept a trifling loan of three hundred pounds, to be repaid as soon as you may be enabled to do so, with perfect convenience. If, unhappily for yourself, that time should never arrive, be assured, my dear sir, that you will not occasion me the slightest imaginable inconvenience; for a long and successful practice has made me far more than independent of my profession, and of the world; as will, I am confident, be the case with you, should Providence spare your life. I happen to have been aware that, but for recent occurrences, it was your intention, about this time, to have commenced a second year's study, with either Mr Crystal, or Mr Mansfield, the conveyancer. You will now, I trust, carry that intention into effect, without delay, as time is very precious to you. I should venture to suggest, that at this period of the year, when the gentlemen of the common-law bar quit town for the circuit, as will be the case within a few weeks with Mr Crystal, it would hardly answer your purpose to enter the chambers of a gentleman in that department; but as *conveyancers* remain much longer in town, you may perhaps think it expedient immediately to engage with Mr Mansfield, and re-occupy your powerful faculties with those invigorating and invaluable studies in which you have already made, as I hear, so great a progress, and which will assuredly bring you rapid fortune and distinction. It will also serve to divert your thoughts from those wretched objects on which otherwise they will be too apt to dwell.

" You will find that I have this day paid in to your credit, at your bankers,

the sum of £300. And believe me to remain, my dear sir—Ever your sincere and faithful friend,

" C. RUNNINGTON.

" P.S.—Do not give yourself one moment's concern about the expense of the recent proceedings, which is, I assure you, trifling."

It would be difficult to over-estimate the gratitude and admiration with which Mr Aubrey was inspired by the foregoing letter of a gentleman whose generosity and high feeling he might well consider a set-off against twenty Quirks, Gammons, and Snaps; and had Mr Aubrey's acquaintance with the profession been larger, he would have found many an unpretending Runnington: inviolable depositories of the greatest confidence which man can repose in man, scorning the bare idea of a meanness, and exhibiting great ability, discretion, forbearance, and liberality, under circumstances of trial and difficulty which none can so well appreciate as themselves, or those who have experienced the value of their services.

Mr Aubrey permitted no morbid fastidiousness to frustrate the generous and opportune intervention of Mr Runnington; resolving, moreover, to profit by his judicious suggestions as to the course of his study, and to commence, as soon as possible, his attendance at the chambers of Mr Mansfield. Thus, suddenly relieved, for a considerable and a definite interval, from the crushing pressure to which he had been latterly subject, he, and indeed Mrs Aubrey and Kate, experienced great buoyancy and exhilaration of spirits. Could, however, their sense of tranquillity and security be otherwise than short-lived? What sort of a prospect was that before them? Terrifying and hopeless indeed. As daily melted away the precious interval between the present time and the dreadful month of November—midst whose gloomy haze was visible, to his shuddering eyes, the dismal porch of a prison, where he must be either immured for his life, or its greater portion, or avail

himself of the bitter ignominious immunity afforded by the insolvent laws—the hearts of all of them sunk to their former depth of oppression. Still, resolved to work while it was day, he addressed himself to his studies with redoubled energy, and of course made proportionate advances. But all this suffering—all this exertion, mental and physical—began to leave visible traces in his worn and emaciated appearance; and I grieve to add, that the same cause not a little impaired the beauty, and injured the spirits, of the devoted and incomparable women whom Heaven had given to him, like angels, for his companions in the night and wilderness of his sorrow.

The reader being now apprised of the footing upon which matters stood between Mr Delamere and Kate Aubrey, will be able to say what chance Mr Gammon had of obtaining the bright object upon which he had set his dark and baleful eye, and to secure which he was racking his brain, and devising such intricate schemes of deliberate and cruel villainy? As well might he have sighed after the planet Venus—sweet star of eve!—as sought to call peerless Kate his own!—Yet full before his mind's eye stood ever her image—though one should have thought that there was amply sufficient, in the very circumstances in which he was placed, to occupy every spare thought and feeling. Suppose the action for the bribery penalties should go against him, and he should be at once fixed with a liability for some five thousand pounds, including debt and costs? And more than that sum, be it known, he had recently lost, in a speculation in foreign stock, besides standing in a precarious position with respect to certain of the many speculations in which he had launched both himself, and others. Under these circumstances, it became hourly of greater importance to him to secure the annuity of £2000 on the Yatton pro-

perty, which he had with such difficulty extorted from Titmonse. He resolved, moreover, to try the experiment of raising money on the bond of Lord De la Zouch; and it also occurred to him, as possible, that even if he shold fail in the main object which he had proposed to himself, in his artful and oppressive machinations against Aubrey, yet they might be the means of bringing forward friends to extricate him from his difficulties, by discharging the sums for which he was liable. It was, therefore, not till he had set into train the various matters laid before the reader, that he set off on a hurried visit to Yorkshire, in order to ascertain the state of Lady Stratton's affairs; to make arrangements for collecting evidence, in the impending trials for bribery; and carry into effect some preliminary measures for augmenting the whole of the Yatton rent-roll, by nearly £2000 a-year.

His first interview with Mr Parkinson, apprised him distinctly of the equivocal intestacy of Lady Stratton. Good Mr Parkinson was no match for Mr Gammon, but would have been more nearly so, if he could have done but one thing—hold his tongue: but he was a good-natured, easy-tempered chatterer, and Gammon always extracted from him, in a few moments, whatever he knew upon any subject. "Twas thus that he succeeded in obtaining conclusive evidence of the intestacy; for Gammon discovered that the unexecuted draft of the intended will had never been seen by Lady Stratton, or read over to her; but had been drawn up by Mr Parkinson himself, a day or two after receiving her ladyship's instructions;—that those instructions, moreover, had been merely oral.

"It is one of the most melancholy cases I ever met with!" exclaimed Gammon with a sigh. "I suppose the reverses of the Aubrey family frequently formed a subject of her ladyship's conversation?"

"Oh, she has talked with me for hours together—and even shortly before her last illness!"

"It is, methinks, enough to raise the poor old lady from her grave, to find so much of her property diverted thus to one who does not want it, and who was a total stranger!"

"Ay, it is indeed!"

"I am a little surprised, to tell you the truth, that, under the circumstances, her ladyship should not have thought of at least dividing the proceeds of the policy between Miss Aubrey and Mr"—

"I do assure you that that is the very thing I heard her talk about doing!" replied Mr Parkinson.

"That will do," thought his wily companion; "thank God! she's clearly intestate, then, for Parkinson's draught does not contain her last will and testament—that will do—thank you, my honest friend!" This was what was passing through Gammon's mind, while a sympathising expression was upon his face, and he shook his head, and deplored the untoward event which had happened, in very pathetic terms indeed. On quitting Mr Parkinson, Gammon thus pursued the train of his thoughts:—

"What if I should allow this paper to be admitted to probate? Let me see—it will give Miss Aubrey some fifteen thousand pounds:—or one might take out administration in favour of Titmouse, and then suggest to her that I had the means of nullifying the proceedings, and carrying into effect Lady Stratton's intentions—for the Letters may be repealed at any time.—Stay, however. It is by no means impossible, that when Parkinson comes to communicate with Aubrey, or that deep old fellow Runnington, they may think of lodging a *caveat* against our letters of administration: but they'll fail—for Parkinson must speak conclusively on *that* point, after what he has said to me. So, perhaps, the better way will be, to take out administration in the usual way, and see what *they* will do.—Then, there's Aubrey's bond—poor devil!—is it not unfortunate for him?—But that shall be reserved; let us see the effect of our other movements first."

When Mr Gammon returned to

Yatton from the late Lady Stratton's residence, he found several letters awaiting his arrival. One was from Mr Quirk—poor muddle-headed old soul!—all went wrong with him, the moment that he missed Gammon from beside him. He wrote letters every day, which were a faithful type of the confusion always prevailing in his thoughts; for though he was "up to" the ordinary criminal business of the office, in which he had had some forty years' experience, their general business had latterly become so extended, and, to Quirk, complicated, that his head, as it were, spun round from morning to night, and all he could do was to put himself and everybody about him, into a bustle and fever. So he told Gammon, in his last letter, that things were not as they ought to be, at Saffron Hill—nor would they be, till "good friend Gammon returned:" and, moreover, the old gentleman complained that Snap was getting careless and irregular in his attendance—and, in fact, he—Quirk—had something particular to say to Gammon, when they met, about the aforesaid Snap!

Then came a letter from the Earl of Dreddlington, marked "*Private and confidential*," containing an important communication, to the effect that his lordship had that day granted an audience to a scientific gentleman of great eminence, and particularly well skilled in geology; and he had satisfied the Earl of a fact which the aforesaid scientific gentleman told his lordship he had discovered after a close geological survey of the superficial strata of the Isle of Dogs—viz. that at a little depth from the surface, there ran, in parallel strata, rich beds of copper, lead, and coal, alternately, such as could not possibly fail of making almost an instantaneous and an enormous return. His lordship, therefore, suggested the immediate formation of a company to purchase the Isle of Dogs, and work the mines!—and "begged to be favoured with" Mr Gammon's views on this subject, by return of post. In a postscript, his lordship informed Gammon, that he

had just parted with all his Golden Egg shares, at a considerable profit; and that the Gunpowder and Fresh Water Company's shares were rising daily, on account of the increasing probability of a universal war. Gammon did not think it worth while to send any answer to the communication of his senior partner; but wrote off a courteously urgent confidential letter to the Earl, begging his lordship would do him the honour of taking no steps in the matter till Mr Gammon could wait upon his lordship in town. Then Gammon wrote to the secretary of the VULTURE INSURANCE COMPANY, giving them notice of the death of Lady Stratton, who was insured in their office in a policy to the amount of £15,000, to which, her ladyship having died intestate, the writer's client, Tittlebat Titmouse, Esq., M.P. for Yatton, had become entitled as administrator — heing her ladyship's nearest next of kin :—that he intended to take out letters of administration forthwith; and formal evidence would be furnished to the Company, in due time, of the completion of his legal title to the policy.

BOOK THE NINTH.

CHAPTER I.

FORTUNE PLAYS FRANKS WITH TITMOUSE; THE DESCENT OF THE VULTURE; AND OTHER MATTERS OF MOMENT TO GAMMON.

THE skittish, frolicsome, and malicious jade, Fortune—to talk after the manner of men—after petting and fondling Titmouse, and overwhelming him with her favours, suddenly turned round, I am here concerned to say, and hit him a severe slap in the face, without the least provocation on his part, or rhyme or reason on hers. And it happened in this wise.

DAPPER SMUG, Esq., the secretary of the Vulture, wrote by return of post to Mr Gammon, saying that he had laid Mr Gammon's letter before the directors; and that as soon as he should have learned their pleasure on the subject, he would write to Mr Gammon again. And so he did—but only to request that gentleman to communicate with Messrs Screw and Son, the Company's solicitors. This Mr Gammon did, and in due course received a letter to the astounding purport and effect following—that is to say, that they had carefully considered the case, and regretted sincerely that they could not feel it their duty to recommend the directors to pay the policy! The directors had a duty, sometimes—they would have it appear—a very painful one, to perform to the public; and in short—in plain English, they intended to resist the claim altogether! Gammon wrote in astonishment to know the grounds of their refusal; and at length discovered, that that truly respectable

Company, considered themselves in possession of decisive evidence, to show that the policy had been vitiated through the concealment, or rather non-communication, of a material fact on the part of the late Lady Stratton—possibly unintentionally—viz. that she was, at the time of executing the policy, subject to the GOUT!

Gammon, grievously concerned, made anxious inquiries of the servants, of Dr Goddart, Mr Parkinson, and of others, who expressed infinite astonishment, declaring that she had never once exhibited the slightest symptoms of the complaint. Messrs Screw, however, were politely inflexible—they declared that they had the positive testimony of several witnesses, one of them an eminent physician, to the fact that, during the week in which the policy had been executed, she had experienced an attack of gout which had confined her to the sofa for three days. [The simple truth was, that her ladyship had about that time certainly been confined to the sofa, but merely from her heel having been galled a little by a tight shoe.] They, moreover, sent to Mr Gammon the full name of the officer in whose name the Company was to be sued—the aforesaid Dapper Smug; and requested Mr Gammon to forward process to them in the usual way. Gammon, on inquiry, learned the character of the Company, and almost gnashed his

teeth in rage and despair.—So at it they went—*Titmouse* (Administrator) v. *SMUG*. Then came a Declaration as long as my arm; Pleas to match it; then a Commission to examine witnesses abroad, principally a Dr Podagra, who had settled in China; then a Bill of Discovery filed on behalf of the Company; a Cross Bill filed by Mr Titmouse against the Company; a Demurrer to the one, Exceptions to the Answer, to the other.—Here, in short, was “a very pretty quarrel.” The stake was adequate; the Company rich; Mr Titmouse eager; Gammon infuriate; and there was not the least chance of the thing being decided at all for possibly three or four years to come; and poor Titmouse was thus not only kept out of a comfortable round sum of money, but obliged to carry on, all the while, an expensive and harassing litigation. So much for insuring with a Company which looks so sharply after the interests of *its shareholders*, in preference to those of the survivors of the dead insurers!—But as far as Titmouse and Gammon were concerned, it seemed a *dead lock*, and at a somewhat critical conjuncture too.

As to the latter, the sudden and unexpected rebuff which he encountered, in the Vulture Insurance Company’s refusal to pay the policy on the late Lady Stratton’s life, was calculated seriously to embarrass his complicated movements. He foresaw the protracted and harassing course of litigation into which he should be driven, before he could compel them to liquidate so heavy a claim; but, with all his long-headedness—his habitual contemplation of the probable and possible effects and consequences of whatever event happened to him—this snap of the Vulture, was attended with results defying his calculations: of such a description, and signal importance, as will perhaps surprise the reader, and serve to illustrate, in a striking manner, the Controlling Agency which is at work in the conduct of human affairs—but one to which the principles of Mr Gammon, denied an existence. Nor was this the only reverse which

about this period occurred to him; and not a little perplexed was he to account for such a sudden confluence of adverse circumstances as he by-and-by experienced! when he found the truth of the King of Denmark’s observation—

“When sorrows come—they come not single spies,
BUT IN BATTALIONS.” *

On applying at Doctor’s Commons, in the ordinary way, for a grant to Mr Titmouse, of Letters of Administration to Lady Stratton, Mr Gammon discovered the existence of a little document, for which he certainly was not entirely unprepared, but which, nevertheless, somewhat disconcerted him; principally on account of the additional plea it would afford the Vulture Company for resisting payment of the policy. How, indeed, could they be expected to pay a sum of such magnitude, to a person whose title to receive it was disputed by another claimant? The document alluded to was a *CAVEAT*, and ran thus:—

“Let nothing be done in the goods of Dame Mary Stratton, late of Warkleigh, in the parish of Warkleigh, in the county of York, deceased, unknown to Obadiah Pounce, proctor for *John Thomas*, having interest.”

Now, the reader will observe that this “*John Thomas*” is, like the “*John Doe*” of the common lawyers, a mere man of straw; so that this peremptory, but mysterious mandate, would afford an inquirer no information as to either the name of the party intending to resist the grant of administration, or the grounds of such resistance. Mr Gammon, however, naturally concluded that the move was made on behalf of Mr Auhrey, and that the ground of his opposition was, the alleged will of Lady Stratton. To be prepared for such an encounter when the time arrived, Mr Gammon had noted down, carefully, the important admissions made to him by Mr Parkinson; and having, for a while, disposed of this affair, he betook himself to the great conspiracy case which I have already mentioned; and, in bringing which to

* Hamlet.

a successful issue, he unquestionably exhibited great ability, and deserved the compliments paid to him by the counsel, whose labours he had, by his lucid arrangement, materially abbreviated and lightened. This matter also over, and fairly off his mind, he addressed himself to an affair, then pending, of great importance to himself personally—viz. a certain cause of *Wigley v. Gammon*; which, together with the three other special jury causes in which the same person was plaintiff, was to come on for trial at York, as the reader has seen, early in the second week of the assizes, which were to commence within a few days' time. As already intimated, Mr Subtle had been retained for the plaintiff in all the actions, together with Mr Sterling and Mr Crystal; and, as Mr Quicksilver had become Lord Blossom and Box, Mr Gammon was sorely perplexed for a leader—his junior, of course, being Mr Lynx. He had retained a Mr Wilmington to lead for the other three defendants—a man of undoubted ability, experienced, acute, dexterous, witty, and eloquent, and exceedingly well qualified to conduct such a case as Mr Gammon's: but that gentleman got exceedingly nervous about the matter as the day of battle drew near—and, at length, resolved on taking down special Sir Charles Wolstenholme. Now, I do not see why he should have thought it necessary to go to so enormous an expense when such able assistance could have been had upon the circuit—but, down went that eminent personage. Their consultation was gloomy; Sir Charles acknowledging that he felt great apprehension as to the result, from the witnesses who were likely to be produced on the other side.

"It's a pity that we haven't the Yatton election committee to deal with, Mr Gammou!" said Sir Charles with a sly sarcastic smile. "We've rather a different tribunal to go before now—eh?"

Mr Gammon smiled—how miserably!—shook his head, and shrugged his shoulders. "We manage these matters rather differently in a court

of law!" continued Sir Charles with a fearful significance!

When the important morning of the trial arrived, there was a special jury sworn, consisting of gentlemen of the county—of integrity and independence—above all suspicion. Mr Subtle opened a shockingly clear and strong case, to be sure; and what was worse, he proved it, and so as to carry conviction to the minds of all in court. Sir Charles felt his opponent's case to be impregnable; and, in spite of several acute and severe cross-examinations, and a masterly speech, the stern and upright judge who tried the cause summed up decisively against the defendant, with many grave remarks on the profligate and systematic manner in which it appeared that the offences had been committed. After a brief consultation, the jury returned into court with a verdict for the plaintiff, in the sum of £2500; that is, for five penalties of £500!* A similar result ensued in each of the two following cases of *Wigley v. Mudflint*, and *Wigley v. Bloodsuck*; both of whom seemed completely stupefied at an issue so totally different from that which they had been led to expect, by the very different view of things taken by the election committee! As for Mudflint, had the amount been anything within reason, doubtless the afflicted pastor of a little, but highly enlightened, congregation, would have laid the case before it, confident of their sympathy on behalf of so holy a cause as emancipating the people from the fetters of religion: but, as it was, from what quarter under heaven he was to get the means of satisfying that truly diabolical verdict, he could not conjecture; and his face became several shades sallower as soon as he had heard his doom pronounced; but Bloodsuck, who had turned quite white, whispered in his ear, through teeth chattering with terror, that of course Mr Titmouse would see them harmless—

"Oh Lord!" however, muttered his fellow-martyr, in a cold perspiration—"I should like to hear Mr Gammon

* See APPENDIX.

recommending him to do so, *under circumstances!*"

Poor Woodlouse was more fortunate—somehow or another he contrived to creep and wriggle out of the danger! Whether from his utter insignificance, or because the destructive verdicts against Gammon, Mudflint, and Bloodsuck had satiated the avenger, I know not; but the case was not pressed strongly against him, and the jury took a surpassingly merciful view of the evidence. But, alas! what a shock this gave to the Liberal cause in Yatton! How were the mighty fallen!

As soon after this melancholy result as Messrs Mudflint and Bloodsuck had recovered their presence of mind sufficiently to discuss the matter together, they were clearly of opinion—were those brethren in distress—that Mr Titmouse was bound, both in law, honour, and morality, to indemnify them against the consequences of acts done solely on his behalf, and at his implied request. They made the thing very clear indeed, theoretically, to Mr Gammon, who listened to them with marked interest and attention, and undertook "to endeavour to convince" Mr Titmouse of the justice of their claims; secretly resolving, also, not to lose sight of his own: nay, in fact, he made sure of satisfying Mr Titmouse on that score. But the personal liability which, in the first instance, he had thus incurred, to an extent of upwards of £3000, supposing him, by any accident, to fail in *re-couping* himself out of the assets of Mr Titmouse, was not the only unfortunate consequence of this serious miscarriage. Such a verdict as had passed against Mr Gammon places a man in an awkward, and—if one may use the word—*nasty* position, before the public, and renders it rather difficult for him to set himself right again.

"Tis really a serious thing to stand convicted of the offence of bribery; it makes a man look sheepish indeed, ever after, especially in political life. 'Tis such a beam in a man's own eye, to be pulled out before he can be deemed capable of seeing the mote in

his neighbour's!—and Mr Gammon felt this. Then, again, he had received a certain pledge from an eminent member of the government, to be performed in the event of his being able to secure the seat for Yatton on a general election, which was considered not unlikely to happen within a few months; but this accursed verdict was likely to prove an insurmountable obstacle in the way of his advancement; and his chagrin and vexation may be easily imagined. He conceived a blighting hatred of the instigator of these unprincipled and vindictive proceedings, Lord De la Zouch, who seemed to have put them up—him, Mudflint, Bloodsuck, and Woodlouse—like four birds to be shot at, and brought down, one by one, as his lordship chose! As soon as these four melancholy causes above mentioned were over—Gammon, considering himself bound, on the score of bare decency, to remain at York till his fellow-sufferers had been disposed of, repaired to Yatton, to see how matters were going on there.

It grieves me to say that good old Yatton, with all about it, was woefully changed for the worse, since the departure of the excellent Aubreys, and the accession of Mr Titmouse. The local superintendence of his interests had been intrusted by Gammon to the Messrs Bloodsuck; who had found their business, in consequence, so much increasing, as to require the establishment of Mr Barnabas at Yatton, while his father remained at Grilston; their partnership, however, continuing. He had, accordingly, run up a thin slip of a place, at the end of the village furthest from the park gates, and within a few yards of the house in which old Blind Bess had ended her days: and was, in point of fact, the first attorney that had ever lived in Yatton. There was a particularly impudent and priggish air about his residence. The door was painted a staring mahogany colour, and bore a bright brass plate, with the words—"MESSRS BLOODSUCK & SON,"—words shooting terror into the heart of many a passer-by, especially the tenants of

Mr Titmouse. At the moment, for instance, of Mr Gammon's arrival at Yatton, on the present occasion, actions for rent, and other matters, were actually pending against fourteen of the poorer tenants! 'Twas all up with them, poor wretches, as soon as the Messrs Bloodsuck had fairly fastened upon them. Let them be a day or two in arrear with their rent, a *cognovit*, or *warrant of attorney*—for the sake of the costs it produced—was instantly proposed; and, if the expensive security were demurred to by the poor souls, by that night's post went up instructions to town for a writ to be sent down by return!

If some of the more resolute questioned the propriety of a distress made upon them with cruel precipitancy, they found themselves immediately involved in a replevin suit, from whose expensive intricacies they were at length glad to escape, terrified, on any terms. Then actions of trespass, and so forth, were commenced upon the most frivolous pretexts. Old and convenient rights of way were suddenly disputed, and made the subjects of expensive lawsuits. Many of the former quiet inhabitants of the village had been forced out of it, their places being supplied by persons of quite a different description; and a bad state of feeling, chiefly arising out of political rancour, had, for instance, just given rise to three actions—two of *assault* and one of *slander*—from that once peaceful little village, and which had been tried at those very assizes! Poor Miss Aubrey's village school, alas! had been transmogrified into a chapel for Mr Mudflint, where he rallied round himself, every Sunday, an excited throng of ignorant and disaffected people, and regaled them with seditious and blasphemous harangues. 'Twould have made your hair stand on end to hear the language in which he spoke of the sacred mysteries of the Christian religion—it would have filled you with disgust and indignation to hear his attacks upon the Church of England and its ministers, and in particular upon little exem-

plary unoffending old Dr Tatham, whom he described as "batteniog upon bigotry and extortion." Strange and melancholy to relate, this novel mode of procedure on the part of Mr Mudflint, for a while succeeded. In vain did the white-haired and learned vicar preach his best sermons, and in his best manner—he beheld his church thinning, while the chapel of Mr Mudflint was filled. And, as he went about the village, in the vigilant and affectionate discharge of his pastoral duties, he perceived symptoms, now and then, of a grievously altered maner towards him, on the part of those who had once hailed his approach, and his ministrations, with a kind of joyful reverence, and cordiality. Mudflint had also, in furtherance of his purpose of bitter hostility, in concert with his worthy coadjutors the Bloodsucks, stirred up two or three persons in the parish, to resist the Doctor's claim to tithe, and offer harassing obstructions to the collecting of it. In justice to the Church, and to his successors, he could not permit his rights to be thus questioned, and denied, with impunity; and thus, to his sore grief, the worthy old vicar found himself, for the first time in his life, involved in a couple of lawsuits, which he feared, even if he lived to win them, would ruin him.

It may be imagined that Mudflint's discomfiture at the assizes was calculated to send him, like a scotched snake, writhing, hissing, and snapping, through the village, at all that came in his way. It is possible that Mr Gammon was not so fully apprised of all these doings as is now the reader; yet he saw and heard enough to lead him to suspect that things were going a little too far. He took, however, no steps towards effecting an abatement, or discontinuance of them. Just at present, moreover, he was peculiarly reluctant to interfere with any of the proceedings of the Messrs Bloodsuck, and confined himself to receiving their report as to some arrangements which he had desired them to carry into effect. In the first place, he did not disclose the existence of his heavy and newly-created rent-

charge, but gave them to understand that Mr Titmouse's circumstances were such as to make it requisite to extract as much from the property as could possibly be obtained, by raising the rents—by effecting a further mortgage upon the property, and by a sale of all the timber that was fit for felling. It was found necessary to look out for new tenants to one or two of the largest farms on the estate, as the present ones declared themselves unable to sustain the exorbitant rents which they were called upon to pay; so orders were given to advertise for tenants, in the county and other newspapers. Then Mr Gammon went all over the estate, to view the condition of the timber, attended by the sullen and reluctant wood-bailiff, who, though he retained his situation, mortally hated his new master, and all connected with him. Very little timber was, according to *his* account, fit for felling! Having looked into these various matters, Mr Gammon took his departure for town, glad to escape, though for never so brief an interval, the importunities of Messrs Mudflint and Bloodsuck, on the subject of the late verdicts against them, and which he pledged himself to represent in a proper way to Mr Titmouse.

On arriving in town, he lost no time in waiting upon the great man to whom he looked for that political advancement after which his soul pined. He was received with manifest coolness, evidently occasioned by the position in which he had been placed by the result of the action for bribery penalties. What that eminent personage objected to, be it understood, was not Mr Gammon's having bribed, but allowing himself to have been found out! On solemnly assuring his patron, however, that the verdict was entirely against evidence, and that Sir Charles Wolstenholme was, in the next term, going to move for a rule to set aside the verdict, on that and several other grounds, and that, by such means, the cause could be, at the least, "hung up" for heaven only knew how long to come—till, in short, people had forgotten all about it—the

clouds slowly disappeared from the great man's brow; especially on his being assured that Gammon's return for Yatton, on the next vacancy, provided he were not incapacitated from standing, was a matter of absolute certainty. Then he gave Mr Gammon certain assurances, which flushed his cheek with delight and triumph—delight and triumph inspired by a conviction that his deeply-laid schemes, his comprehensive plans, were, despite a few minor and temporary checks and reverses, being crowned with success. It was true that his advances towards Miss Aubrey appeared to have been peremptorily and definitively rejected; but he resolved to wait till the time should have arrived for bringing other reserved forces into the field—by the aid of which he yet hoped to make an equally unexpected and decisive demonstration against the, as yet, impregnable fort of beauty.

The more immediate object of his anxieties was to conceal, as far as possible, his connection with the various joint-stock speculations, into which he had entered with a wild and feverish eagerness to realise a rapid fortune. He had already withdrawn from one or two with which he had been for only a brief time, and secretly, connected—not, however, until he had realised no inconsiderable sum by his judicious but unscrupulous operations. He was also anxious, if practicable, to extricate Lord Dredlington, at the proper conjuncture, with as little damage as possible to his lordship's fortune or character: for his lordship's countenance and good offices were becoming of greater consequence to Mr Gammon, than ever. It was true that he possessed information—I mean that concerning Titmouse's birth and true position—which he considered would, whenever he thought fit to avail himself of it, give him an absolute mastery over the unhappy peer for the rest of his life; but he felt that it would be a critical and dreadful experiment, and not to be attempted but in the very last resort.

He would sometimes gaze at the unconscious Earl, and speculate, in a sort of reverie, upon the possible effects attending the dreaded disclosure, till he would give a sort of inward start, as he realised the fearful and irretrievable extent to which he had committed himself. He shuddered also to think that he was, moreover, in a measure, at the mercy of Titmouse himself—who, in some mad moment of drunkenness or desperation,—of pique or revenge, might disclose the fatal secret, and precipitate upon him, when least prepared for them, all its long-dreaded consequences. The slender faculties of Lord Dredlington had been for months in a state of novel and grateful excitement, through the occupation afforded them by his connection with the fashionable modes of commercial enterprise—joint-stock companies; the fortunate members of which got rich, they scarcely knew how. It seemed as though certain persons had but to acquire a nominal interest in some great transaction of this sort, to find it pouring wealth into their coffers, as if by magic; and it was thus that Lord Dredlington, amongst others, found himself quietly realising large sums of money, without apparent risk or exertion—his movements being skilfully guided by Gammon, and one or two others, who, whilst they treated him as a mere instrument to aid in deluding the public, yet contrived to impress him with the flattering notion, that he was, in a masterly manner, directing their course of procedure, and richly en-

titled to their deference and gratitude. 'Twas, indeed, ecstasy to peer old Lord Dredlington to behold his name, from time to time, glittering in the van—himself figuring away as a chief patron—a prime mover—in some vast and lucrative undertaking, which almost from the first moment of its projection, attracted the notice and confidence of the monied classes, and became productive to its originators! Many attempts were made by his brother peers, and these who once had considerable influence over him, to open his eyes to the questionable nature of the concerns to which he was so freely lending the sanction of his name and personal interference; but his pride and obstinacy caused him to turn a deaf ear to their suggestions; and the skilful and delicious flatteries of Mr Gammon and others, seconded by the substantial fruits of his fancied skill and energy, urged him on from step to step, till he became one of the most active and constant in his interference with the concerns of one or two great speculations, such as have been mentioned in a former part of this history, and from which he looked forward to realising, at no distant day, resplendent results. Never, in fact, had one man obtained over another a mere complete mastery, than Mr Gammon over the Earl of Dredlington; at whose haughtily exclusive table he was a frequent guest, and thereby obtained opportunities of acquiring the good-will of one or two other persons of the Earl's intellectual status and calibre.

CHAPTER II.

THE ARTIFICIAL RAIN COMPANY EVAPORATES; AND A REMARKABLE SCENE
BETWEEN MR GAMMON AND THE EARL OF DREDDLINGTON.

THE Earl of Dreddlington was sitting in his library, his table covered with letters and papers, one morning, with a newspaper—the *Morning Growl*—lying before him, and a certain portion of the aforesaid newspaper he had read over several times, with exquisite satisfaction. He had, late on the preceding evening, returned from his seat in Hertfordshire, whither he had been suddenly called on business early in the morning; so that it was not until the time at which he is now presented to the reader, that his lordship had had an opportunity of perusing what was affording him such gratification—viz. a brief, but highly flattering report of a splendid white-bait dinner which had been given to him, the day before, at Blackwall, by a party of some thirty gentlemen, who were, *inter nos*, adroit and successful traders upon that inexhaustible capital, public credulity, as founders, managers, and directors, of various popular joint-stock companies; and the progress of which, in public estimation, had been materially accelerated, by the countenance of so distinguished a nobleman, as the Right Hon. the Earl of Dreddlington, G.C.B., &c. &c. &c.* When his lordship's carriage, containing himself, in evening dress, and wearing his red ribbon, with one or two foreign orders, and also his son-in-law, the member for Yatton, who was dressed in the highest style of fashionable elegance, drew up opposite the doorway of the hotel, his lordship was received, on alighting, by several of those who had assembled

to do him honour, in the same sort of flattering and reverential manner which you may conceive would be exhibited by a party of proudly obsequious East India directors, on the occasion of their giving a banquet to a newly-appointed governor-general of India! Covers had been laid for thirty-five; and the entertainment was in all respects of a sumptuous description—every way worthy of the entertainers, and their distinguished guest. Not far from the Earl, sat Mr Gammon. Methinks I see now his gentlemanly figure—his dark-blue coat, white waistcoat, and simple black stock—his calm smile, the sarcasm that occasionally flickered about his compressed lips,—his keen watchful eye, his well-developed forehead, suggesting to you a capability of the highest kind of intellectual action. There was a subdued cheerfulness in his manner, which was bland and fascinating as ever; and towards the great man of the day, he exhibited such a marked air of deference as was indeed, to the object of it, most delicious, and seductive.

The poor Earl soon mounted into the seventh heaven of delight; he had never experienced anything of this sort before; he felt GLORIFIED—for such qualities were eloquently attributed to him, in the after-dinner speeches, as even he had not before imagined the existence of in himself. His ears were ravished with the sound of his own praises. He was infinitely more intoxicated by the magnificent compliments which he received, than by the unusual, but still not excessive,

* See APPENDIX.

quantity of champagne which he had half-unconsciously taken during dinner; the combined effect of all being, to produce a state of delightful excitement which he had never known before. Mr Titmouse, M.P., also came in for his share of laudation, and made — said the report in the *Morning Growl*—a brief but spirited speech, in return for the compliment of his health being proposed. At length, it being time to think of returning to town, his lordship withdrew, Sir Sharper Bubble, the chairman, and others, attending him bareheaded to his carriage, which his lordship and Titmouse having entered, were driven off, amidst the bows and courteous inclinations of the gentlemen standing upon and around the steps. Titmouse almost immediately fell asleep, overpowered by the prodigious quantity of wine which he had swallowed ; and thus left the Earl, who was himself in a much more buoyant humour than usual with him, to revel in recollections of the homage which he had been receiving. Now, this was the affair, of which a flourishing though brief account, privately paid for by the gentleman who sent it, appeared in the *Morning Growl*, with a magnificent speech of his lordship's about free trade, and the expansive principles of commercial enterprise, and so forth ! 'Twas true, that the Earl had no recollection of having either meditated the delivery of any such speech, or actually delivered it — but he *might* have done so for all that, and possibly did. He read over the whole account several times, as I have already said ; and at the moment of his being presented to the reader, sitting in his easy-chair, and with the newspaper lying before him, he was in a delightful state of feeling. He secretly owned, that he could not conceive himself entirely undeserving of the compliments which had been paid to him. Considerably advanced though he was in life, he was consciously developing energies commensurate with the exigencies which were calling for their display—energies which had long lain dormant, for want of such opportunities.

What practical tact and judgment he felt conscious of exhibiting, while directing the experienced energies of mercantile men, and capitalists ! How proud and delighted at the share he was taking in steering the commercial enterprise of the country into proper quarters, and towards proper objects ! And, moreover, while he was thus benefiting his country, he was also sensibly augmenting his own private revenue. In his place in the House of Lords, also, he displayed a wonderful energy, and manifested surprising interest in all fiscal questions started there. He was, consequently, nominated one of a Committee, into the appointment of which he, and one or two others like him, had teased and worried their Lordships to inquire into the best mode of facilitating the formation, extending the operations, and limiting the liabilities of Joint Stock Companies ; and asked at least three times as many questions of the witnesses called before them, as any other member of the Committee. He also began to feel still loftier aspirations. His lordship was not without hopes that the declining health of Sir Miserable Muddle, the president of the Board of Trade, would soon open a prospect for his lordship's accession to office, as the successor of that enlightened statesman ; feeling conscious that the mercantile part of the community would look with great satisfaction upon such an appointment, and that thereby the King's government would be materially strengthened. As for matter of a more directly business character, I may mention, that his lordship was taking active measures towards organising the company which has already been alluded to, for the purchase of the Isle of Dogs, and working the invaluable mines of copper, lead, and coal which lay underneath. These and other matters fully occupied his lordship's attention, and kept him from morning to night in a pleasurable state of excitement and activity.

Still he had his drawbacks. The inexorable premier continued to turn

a deaf ear to all his solicitations for a marquisate—till he began to entertain the notion of transferring his support to the opposition; and, in fact, he resolved upon doing so, if another session should have elapsed, without his receiving the legitimate reward of his steadfast adherence to the Liberal cause. Then, again, he became more and more painfully sensible that Lady Cecilia was not happy in her union with Mr Titmouse, and that his conduct was not calculated to make her so; in fact, his lordship began to suspect that there was a total incompatibility of tempers and dispositions which would inevitably force on a separation—under existing circumstances a measure evidently unadvisable. His lordship's numerous inquiries of Mr Gammon, as to the state of Mr Titmouse's property, met occasionally with unsatisfactory, and, as any one of clearer head than his lordship would have seen, inconsistent answers. Mr Titmouse's extravagant expenditure was a matter of notoriety; the Earl himself had been once or twice compelled to come forward, in order to assist in relieving his son-in-law's house from executions; and repeatedly reasoned and remonstrated with him on the impropriety of many parts of his conduct—Titmouse generally acknowledging, with much appearance of compunction and sincerity, that the Earl had too much ground for complaint, and protesting that he meant to change altogether, one of these days. Indeed, matters would soon have been brought to a crisis between the Earl and Titmouse, had not the former been so constantly immersed in business, as to prevent his mind from dwelling upon the various instances of Titmouse's misconduct from time to time coming under his lordship's notice. The condition of Lady Cecilia was one which gave the Earl anxiety and interest. She was *enciente*; and the prospect which this afforded the Earl, of the family honours continuing in a course of direct descent, gave him unspeakable satisfaction. Thus is it, in short, that no one's cup is destitute of some

ingredients of bitterness, or of happiness; that the wheat and the tares*—happiness and anxiety—grow up together.

The above will suffice to indicate the course taken by his lordship's thoughts on the present occasion. He sat back in his chair in a sort of reverie; having laid down his paper, and placed his gold spectacles on the little stand beside him, where lay also his massive old gold repeater. The *Morning Growl* of that morning was late, owing to the arrival of foreign news; but it was brought in to his lordship, just as he was beginning to open his letters. These he laid aside for a moment, in order to skim over the contents of his paper; on which he had not been long engaged, before his eye lit upon a paragraph which gave him a dreadful shock, blanching his cheek, and throwing him into an universal tremor. He read it over several times, almost doubting whether he could be reading correctly. It is possible that the experienced reader may not be taken so much by surprise, as was the Earl of Dredlington; but the intelligence conveyed by the paragraph in question was simply this—that the ARTIFICIAL RAIN COMPANY had, so to speak, suddenly evaporated! — And that this result had been precipitated by the astounding discovery in the City, late in the preceding afternoon, that the managing director of the Company had vanished, with all the available funds of the society—and who should this be, but the gentleman who had presided so ably the evening but one before, over the Blackwall

* These words thus casually used in the text may remind one of a passage in the New Testament; of vast significance, when applied to the moral condition of mankind.—In the parable of the Tares and the Wheat, when the sower's servants proposed to go and gather up the tares at once, the awful answer is—*Nay, let both grow together until the harvest: and then, the tares are first to be gathered together, and bound in bundles, to be burned. The tares had been sown by an enemy; but were not to be rooted up when first they appeared, lest the wheat should be rooted up with them:—Words these worthy of profound reflection.*

dinner to his lordship, viz. Sir SHARPER BUBBLE ! The plain fact was, that that worthy had, at that very time, completed all arrangements necessary for taking the decisive step on which he had determined; and, within an hour's time of handing the Earl of Dredlington to his carriage, in the way that has been described, had slipped into a boat moored by the water side, and got safely on board a fine brig bound for America, just as she was hauling up anchor, and spreading forth her canvass before a steady breeze, which was at that moment bearing him, under the name of Mr Wiggins, rapidly away from the artificial, unsatisfactory, and exhausted state of things which prevailed in the Old World, to a new one, where he hoped there would not exist such impediments in the way of extended commercial enterprise.

As soon as the Earl had a little recovered from the agitation into which this announcement had thrown him, he hastily rang his bell, and ordered his carriage to be got instantly in readiness. Having put the newspaper into his pocket, he was soon on his way, at a great speed, towards the Poultry, where was the office of the Company, with the faintest glimmer of a hope that there might be some mistake about the matter. Ordering his servant to let him out the instant that the carriage drew up, without announcing him, he got down and rang the bell, the outer door being closed, although it was now twelve o'clock. The words "ARTIFICIAL RAIN COMPANY" still shone in gilt letters half a foot long, on the green blind of the window. But all was—still—deserted—dry as Gideon's fleece ! An old woman presently answered his summons. She said she believed the business was given up; and there had been a good many gentlemen, that morning, inquiring about it—that he was welcome to go in—but there was nobody in except her and a little girl. With an air of inconceivable agitation, his lordship went into the lower offices. All was silent; no

clerks were visible—no servants, no porters or messengers; no books, or prospectuses, or writing materials. "I've just given everything a good dusting, sir," said she to the Earl, at the same time wiping off a little dust with the corner of her apron, which had escaped her. Then the Earl went up-stairs into the "Board Room." There, also, all was silent and deserted, and clean and in good order. There was the green baize-covered table, at which he had often sat, presiding over the enlightened deliberations of the directors ! The Earl gazed about him in silent stupor. "They say it's what they calls a blow-up, sir," quoth the old woman. "But I should think it's rather sudden ! There's been several here has looked as much struck as you, sir !" This recalled the Earl to his senses, and, without uttering a word, he descended the stairs. "Beg pardon, sir—but could you tell me who I'm to look to for taking care of the place ? I can't find out the gentleman as sent for me"—

"My good woman," replied the Earl faintly, hastening from the horrid scene, "I know nothing about it;" and, stepping into his carriage, he ordered it to drive on to Lombard Street, to the late Company's bankers. As soon as he had, with a little indistinctness arising from his agitation, mentioned the words "Artificial Rain"—

"Account closed !" was the brief matter-of-fact answer, given in a business-like and peremptory tone, the speaker immediately attending to some one else. The Earl was too much flustered to observe a knowing wink interchanged among the clerks behind, as soon as they had caught the words "Artificial Rain Company !" —The Earl, with increasing trepidation, re-entered his carriage, and ordered it to be driven to the office of Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap. There he arrived in a trice ; but, being informed that Mr Gammon had not yet come, and would probably be found at his chambers in Thavies'

Inn, the horses' heads were forthwith turned, and within a few minutes' time the carriage had drawn up opposite to the entrance to Thavies' Inn—where the Earl had never been before. Without sending his servant on beforehand to inquire, his lordship immediately alighted, and soon found out the staircase where were Mr Gammon's private apartments, on the first floor. The words "MR GAMMON" were painted in white letters over the door, the outer one being open. His lordship's rather hasty summons was answered by Mr Gammon's laundress, a tidy middle-aged woman, who lived in the chambers, and informed the Earl, that if he wished to see Mr Gammon, he had better step in and wait for a minute or two—as Mr Gammon had only just gone to the stationer's, a little way off, and said he should be back in a minute or two.

In went the Earl and sate down in Mr Gammon's sitting-room. It was

a fair-sized room, neatly furnished, more for use than show. A plain deal bookcase, stretching over the whole of one side of the apartment, was filled with books, and beside it, and opposite to the fireplace, was the door of Mr Gammon's bedroom—which, being open, appeared as though it had not been yet set to rights since Mr Gammon had slept in it. He had not, in fact, risen as early as usual that morning. The Earl sate down, having removed his hat; and in placing it upon the table, his eye lit upon an object, which suggested to him a new source of amazement and alarm. It was a freshly executed parchment conveyance, folded up in the usual way, about a foot square in size; and as the Earl sat down, his eye could scarcely fail to read the superscription, in large round hand, which was turned full towards him, and, in short ran thus:—

TITTLEBAT TITMOUSE, Esq., M.P.,
to
Oily Gammon, Gent.

Grant of RENT-CHARGE on
Estates at Yatton, of £2000
per annum.

This almost stopped the Earl's breath. With trembling hands he put on his spectacles, to assure himself that he read correctly; and with a face overspread with dismay—almost unconscious of what he was doing—was gazing intensely at the writing, holding the parchment in his hands; and while thus absorbed, Mr Gammon entered, having darted across the inn, and sprung up-stairs with lightning speed, the instant that his eye had caught Lord Dredlington's equipage standing opposite to the inn. He instantly recollecting having left on the table the deed in question, which had been executed by Titmouse only the evening before; and little anticipated that, of all persons upon the face of the earth, Lord Dredlington would be the first whose eye would light upon it. 'Twas, perhaps, somewhat indiscreet to leave it there; but it was in Gammon's own private residence—where he had very few visitors—and he had intended only a momentary absence, having

gone out, only to purchase some trifling article of stationery. Behold the result!

"My Lord Dredlington!" exclaimed Gammon, breathless with haste and agitation, the instant he saw his worst apprehensions fulfilled. The Earl looked up at him, as it were mechanically, over his glasses, without moving, or attempting to speak.

"I—I—beg your lordship's pardon!" he added quickly and sternly, advancing towards Lord Dredlington. "Pardon me, but surely your lordship cannot be aware of the liberty you are taking—in looking at my private papers!"—and with an eager and not over-ceremonious hand, he took the conveyance out of the unresisting grasp of his noble visitor.

"Sir—Mr Gammon!"—at length exclaimed the Earl in a faltering voice—"what is the meaning of that?" pointing with a tremulous finger to the conveyance which Mr Gammon held in his hand.

"What is the meaning of—a pri-

vate—a strictly private document of mine, my lord?"—replied Gammon with breathless impetuosity, his eye flashing fury, and his face having become deadly pale—"one with which your lordship has no more concern than your footman—one which I surely might have fancied safe from intrusive eyes in my own private residence—one which I am confounded—yes, confounded! my lord, at finding that you could for an instant allow yourself—could consider yourself warranted in even looking at—prying into—and much less presuming to ask questions concerning it!" He held the parchment all this while tightly grasped in his hands; and his appearance and manner might have overpowered a man of stronger nerves than the Earl of Dreddlington. On him, however, it appeared to produce no impression—his faculties seeming quite absorbed with the dismaying discovery he had just made; and he simply inquired, without moving from his chair—"Is it a fact, sir, that you have obtained a rent-charge of two thousand a-year upon my son-in-law's property at Yatton?"

"I deny peremptorily your lordship's right to ask me a single question arising out of information obtained in such a dis—I will say at present only, in such an unprecedented manner!" answered Gammon, vehemently.

"Two thousand a-year, sir!—out of my son-in-law's property?" repeated the Earl, with a kind of bewildered incredulity.

"I cannot comprehend your lordship's conduct in attempting neither to justify what you have done, nor apologise for it," said Gammon, endeavouring to speak calmly, while his heart beat violently; and at the same time depositing the conveyance in a large iron safe, and then locking the door of it, Lord Dreddlington, the while, eyeing his movements in silence.

"Mr Gammon, I must and will have this matter explained; depend upon it, I will have it looked into and thoroughly sifted," at length said Lord

Dreddlington with returning self-possession, as Gammon observed—

"Can your lordship derive any right to information from me, out of an act of your lordship's which no honourable mind—nay, if your lordship insists on my making myself understood—I will say, an act which no gentleman would resort to"—The Earl rose from his chair with calmness and dignity.

"What *your* notions of honourable or gentlemanly conduct may happen to be, sir," said the old peer, drawing himself up to his full height, and speaking with his usual deliberation, "it may not be worth my while to inquire; but let me tell you, sir"—

"My lord, I beg your lordship's forgiveness—I have certainly been hurried by my excitement into expressions which I would gladly withdraw."

"Hear me, sir," replied the Earl, with a composure which, under the circumstances, was wonderful; "it is the first time in my life that any one has presumed to speak to me in such a manner, and to use such language; and I will neither forget it, sir, nor forgive it."

"Then, my lord, I take the liberty of re-asserting what I had withdrawn," said Gammon, his blood appearing suddenly to flow like liquid fire in all his veins. He had never given Lord Dreddlington credit for being able to exhibit the spirit and self-command which he was then displaying. The Earl bowed loftily as Gammon spoke; and on his concluding, said with haughty composure—

"When I entered your room, sir, that document caught my eye accidentally; and on seeing upon the outside of it—for no further have I looked—the name of my own son-in-law, whose solicitor you are, it was but natural that I should suppose there could be no objection to my continuing to examine the outside. That *was* my opinion, sir—that *is* my opinion; your audacious expressions, sir, cannot change that opinion, nor make me forget our relative positions," he added loftily. "I once

more demand, sir, what is the meaning of that extraordinary document?"

Mr Gammon was taken altogether by surprise, by this calmness and resolution on the part of the Earl; and while his lordship spoke, and for some moments afterwards, gazed at him sternly, yet irresolutely, his faculties strained to their utmost, to determine upon the course he should take, in so totally unexpected an emergency. He was not long, however, in deciding.

"Since your lordship desires information from me, let me request you to be seated," said he, in a tone and with an air of profound courtesy, such as, in its turn, took his noble visitor by surprise; and he slowly resumed his seat, Gammon also sitting down nearly opposite to him. "May I, in the first place, venture to inquire to what circumstance I am indebted, my lord, for the honour of this visit?" he inquired.

"Oh, sir—sir—by the way—indeed you may well ask—you must have heard"—suddenly and vehemently interrupted the Earl, whose mind could hold but one important matter at a time.

"To what does your lordship allude?" inquired Gammon, who, of course, knew perfectly well. Having had a hint, some short time previously, that matters were going wrong with the Artificial Rain Company, he had contrived to creep out of it, by selling such shares as he held, at a little loss certainly—and he would have done the same for the Earl, had it been practicable; but his lordship's sudden journey into Hertfordshire had prevented his communicating with his lordship, till the time for acting had passed. Now, therefore, he resolved to be taken by surprise.

"To what do I allude, sir!" echoed the Earl with much agitation, taking the newspaper from his pocket—"The Artificial Rain Company, sir"—

"Well, my lord!"—exclaimed Gammon, with an air of impatient curiosity.

"Sir, it is gone! Blown up! Entirely disappeared, sir!"

"Gone! Blown up! The Artificial

Rain Company? Oh, my lord, it's impossible!" cried Gammon, with well-feigned amazement.

"Sir—it is clean gone! Sir Sharper Bubble, sir! has absconded!"

His lordship handed the paper to Mr Gammon, who read the paragraph (which he had perused some hour or two before in bed, where his own copy of the *Morning Growl* was at that moment lying) with every appearance of horror, and the newspaper quite shook in his trembling hands!

"It cannot—it cannot be true, my lord!" said he, his eyes glued to the paper.

"Sir, it is. I have been myself to the Company's office—it is quite closed—shut up; there is only an old woman there, sir! And, at the banker's, the only answer is—'Account closed!'"

"Then I am nearly a couple of thousand pounds poorer—my Heavens! what shall I do? Do, my lord, let us drive off instantly to Sir Sharper Bubble's house, and see if he be really gone. It may be a villainous fabrication altogether—I never will believe that such a man—How miserable that both your lordship and I should have been out of town yesterday!"

Thus Gammon went on, with great eagerness, hoping to occupy Lord Dreddlington's thoughts exclusively with the matter; but he was mistaken. The Earl, after a little pause, reverted to the previous subject, and repeated his inquiry as to the rent-charge, with an air of such serious determination as soon satisfied Gammon that there was no evading the crisis which had so suddenly arisen. With the topic, his lordship also unconsciously changed his manner, which was again one of offended majesty.

"Sir," said he, with stately deliberation, "let us revert to the subject from which we have for a moment wandered. What you have said to myself personally, cannot be unsaid; but I desire a plain answer, Mr Gammon, to a plain question. Is the document which I had in my hand, an instrument giving you—gracious Heaven!—a charge of two thousand

pounds a-year upon my son-in-law's estate? Sir, once for all, I peremptorily insist on an answer before I leave your chambers; and, if I do not obtain it, I shall instantly cause a rigorous inquiry to be set on foot."

[“You drivelling obstinate old fool!” thought Gammon, but looking the while with mild anxiety at the Earl, “if you were to drop down dead at my feet, now, at this moment, what vexation you would save me! Did it ever before fall to the lot of one mortal man to have to deal with two such idiots as you and Titmouse?”]

“Well, then, my lord, since you are so pertinacious on the point—retaining my strong opinion concerning the utterly indefensible means which enable you to put the question to me—I disdain equivocation or further concealment,” he continued, with forced composure; “and distinctly admit, that the document which was lately in your lordship's hands, *is* an instrument completely executed with all due form, having the effect which it professes to have. It gives me, my lord, a rent-charge for the term of my life, of two thousand pounds a-year upon Mr Titmouse's estate of Yatton.”

“Good God, sir!” exclaimed the Earl, gazing at Gammon, as if thunderstruck with an answer which, nevertheless, he could not but have calculated upon—and which was indeed inevitable.

“That is the fact, my lord, undoubtedly,” said Gammon, with the air of a man who has made up his mind to encounter whatever may present itself.

“There never was such a thing heard of, sir! Two thousand pounds a-year, given to his solicitor, by my son-in-law! Why he is a mere boy!”

“He was old enough to marry the Lady Cecilia, my lord,” interrupted Gammon, calmly, but bitterly.

“That may be, sir,” replied the Earl, his face faintly flushing—“but he is ignorant of business, sir—of the world—or you must have taken advantage of him when he was intoxicated.”

“Nothing—nothing of the kind, my lord; and for the present I pass by

your lordship's gross insinuation: but I will remember it. Never was Mr Titmouse more sober—never in fuller possession of his faculties—never less in liquor—never did he do anything more deliberately, than when he signed that conveyance.”

“Why, have you purchased it, sir? Given consideration for it?” inquired the Earl, with a perplexed air.

“Why did not your lordship make that inquiry before you felt yourself at liberty to make the injurious and insulting observations which you have?”

“Sir, you evade my question,” interrupted the Earl, sternly.

“No, my lord, I do not wish to do so. I *have* given value for it—full value; and Mr Titmouse, if you ask him, will tell you so.”

The Earl paused, for he was nonplussed, for the nonce, by Mr Gammon's peculiar and peremptory manner.

“And is the consideration recorded in the deed, sir?”

“It is, my lord—and truly.”

“I must again ask you, sir—do you mean to tell me that you have given full value for this rent-charge?”

“Full value, my lord.”

“Then why all this mystery, Mr Gammon?”

“Let me ask, in my turn, my lord, why all these questions about a matter with which you have nothing to do? Would it not, allow me to ask, be much better for your lordship to attend to your own affairs, just now, after the alarming intelligence?”

“Sir—sir—I—I—that is—*my* concern,” stammered the Earl, nearly thrust out of his course by this stroke of Gammon's; but he soon recovered himself—for the topic they were discussing had taken a thorough hold of his mind.

“Did you give a pecuniary consideration, Mr Gammon?”

“I gave a large sum in ready money; and the remainder is expressed to be, my long and arduous services to Mr Titmouse, in putting him into possession of his property.”

“Will you, then, favour me with a

copy of this deed, that I may examine it, and submit it to competent friends and advisers?"

"No, I will not, my lord," replied Gammon peremptorily.

"You will not, sir?" repeated the Earl, after a pause, his cold blue eye fixed upon that of Gammon, and his face full of stern and haughty defiance.

"No, my lord, I will not. Probably that answer is explicit enough!" replied Gammon, returning Lord Dredlington's look with unwavering steadfastness. There was a pause.

"But one conclusion can be drawn, then, from your refusal, sir—one highly disadvantageous to you, sir. No one can avoid the inference that there has been foul play, and fraud of the grossest descrip"—

"You are a peer of the realm, Lord Dredlington; try to be a gentleman," said Gammon, who had turned deadly pale. The Earl's eye continued fixed on Gammon, and his lip slightly quivered. That any living being should utter such language to him, seemed a thing quite inexplicable.

"Let me recommend your lordship to be more cautious and measured in your language," said Gammon, visibly struggling to speak with calmness—"especially concerning matters on which you are utterly—profoundly ignorant"—

"I will not long remain so, Mr Gammon; you may rely upon it," replied the Earl with sustained firmness and hauteur.

[“Shall I? shall I? shall I disclose all, and prostrate you, insolent old fool! soul and body?” thought Gammon.]

"I will instantly seek out Mr Titmouse," continued the Earl, "and will soon get at the bottom of this—this—monstrous transaction."

"I cannot, of course, control your lordship's motions. If you do apply to Mr Titmouse, you will in all probability receive the information you seek for—that is, if Mr Titmouse dare, without first consulting me"—

"If—Mr—Titmouse—dare, sir?" echoed the Earl.

"Yes—dare!" furiously retorted

Gammon, his eye, as it were, momentarily flashing fire.

"Sir, this is very remarkable, indeed!" said Lord Dredlington, trying to smile; but it was impossible. His hands trembled so much that he could not draw on his glove without great effort.

"To me, my lord, it is very—very painful," replied Gammon, with an agitation which he could not conceal—"not painful on my own account, but your lordship's"—

"Sir, I appreciate your presumptuous sympathy," interrupted Lord Dredlington. "In the meanwhile, you may depend upon my taking steps, forthwith, of a somewhat decisive character. We shall see, sir, how long acts of this sort can be perpetrated with impunity."

At this point, Gammon had finally determined upon making his long-dreaded disclosure to the Earl of Dredlington—one which he knew would instantly topple him down headlong over the battlements of his lofty and unapproachable pride, as though he had been struck by lightning. Gammon felt himself getting colder every minute—his agitation driving the blood from his extremities, back upon his heart.

"Your lordship is not entitled to any consideration from me," he commenced, with visible emotion—"Your lordship's offensive and uncalled-for observations upon my motives and conduct, irritated me greatly for the moment—but that is gone by, for the present. They have, however, worked my feelings up to a point which will enable me, now, perhaps, better than on any future occasion, to make a disclosure to your lordship, of a secret which, ever since it unhappily came to my knowledge, so help me Heaven! has made me the most miserable of men." There was something in Gammon's countenance and manner which compelled the Earl to sit down again in the chair from which he had risen, and where he remained gazing in wondering silence at Gammon, who proceeded—"It is a communication which will require all your lordship's

strength of mind to prevent its overpowering you"—

"Gracious God, sir, what do you mean? What do you mean, Mr Gammon? Go on, sir!" said the Earl, turning very pale.

"I would even now, my lord, shrink from the precipice which I have approached, and leave your lordship in ignorance of that which—alas, alas!—no earthly power can remedy; but your lordship's singular discovery of the rent-charge, which we have just talked about so warmly, and your determination to become fully acquainted with the circumstances out of which it has arisen, leave me no option."

"Sir, I desire that, without so much circumlocution, you will come to the point. I cannot divine what you are talking about—what you meditate telling me; but I beg of you, sir, to communicate to me what you know, and leave me to hear it as best I can."

"Then your lordship shall be obeyed.—I said, some little time ago, that the instrument granting me the rent-charge upon the Yatton property, recited, as a part of the consideration, my arduous, long-continued, and successful exertions to place Mr Titmouse in possession of that fine estate. It was I, my lord, who searched for him till I found him—the rightful heir to the Yatton property—him, your son-in-law—the possible successor to your lordship in your ancient barony. Night and day I have toiled for him—have overcome all obstacles, and at length placed him in the splendid position which he now occupies. He is not, my lord, naturally of a generous or grateful disposition, as perhaps your lordship may be aware; and had I not insisted on an adequate return for my services, he would have given me none. Therefore, I required him, nay, I extorted from him the instrument in question." Mr Gammon paused for a moment.

"Well, sir. Proceed! I hear you," said the Earl very gravely; on which Gammon resumed.

"How I first acquired a knowledge that Mr Aubrey was wrongfully enjoying the Yatton estates, is of no

moment to your lordship; but one thing does mightily concern your lordship to know, and me to be believed by your lordship in telling you—that, so help me, Heaven! at the time that I discovered Mr Titmouse behind the counter of Mr Tag-rag, in Oxford Street, and up till within a couple of months ago, I had no more doubt about his being entitled, as really the heir-at-law"—The Earl gave a sudden start. "My lord, I would even now beg your lordship to let me take some other opportunity, when we are both calmer, of explaining"—

"Go on, sir," said the Earl, with a great effort, but in a much lower tone of voice than that in which he had before spoken, and sitting with his eyes riveted on those of Mr Gammon, who, notwithstanding his lordship's observation, was compelled by his own sickening agitation, again to pause, for a moment or two. Then he resumed. "I was saying, my lord, that, till about two months ago, I had no more doubt than I have of your lordship's now sitting before me, that Mr Titmouse was the legitimate descendant of the person entitled to enjoy the Yatton estates in preference to Mr Aubrey. His pedigree was subjected to the severest scrutiny which the law of England can devise, and was pronounced complete"—Gammon beheld Lord Dredlington quivering all over; "but to my horror—only I know it, except Mr Titmouse, to whom I told it—I have recently discovered, by an extraordinary accident, that we were, and are, all mistaken.—And—I may as well tell your lordship at once the worst—this young man, Titmouse, proves to be only a natural son, and what is worse, of a woman who had a former husband living"—

Lord Dredlington, whose eyes had for some time been directed towards Gammon with a glassy stare, started up from his chair, and staggered away from it, his arms moving to and fro—his face the picture of horror. It had gone of a ghastly whiteness. His lips moved, but he uttered no sound.

"Oh, my lord! For God's sake be calm!" cried out Gammon, dreadfully shocked, rushing towards the Earl, who kept staggering back, his hands stretched out as if to keep off some approaching object of terror. "My lord! Lord Dredlington! Hear me! Hear me! For Heaven's sake, let me bring you back to your seat. It's only a little faintness!"—He put his arm round the Earl, endeavouring to draw him back towards the easy-chair; but felt him slipping down on the floor, his legs yielding under him; then his head suddenly sank on one side, and the next moment he lay, as it were collapsed, upon the floor, partly supported by Gammon, who, in a fearful state of agitation, shouted out for the laundress.

"Untie his neck-handkerchief, sir; loose his shirt-collar!" cried the woman; and stooping down, while Gammon supported his head, she removed the pressure from his neck. He was breathing heavily. "For God's sake, run off for a doctor—any one—the nearest you can find," gasped Gammon. "The carriage standing before the inn is his lordship's; you'll see his footman—tell him his lordship's in a fit, and send him off also for a doctor!"

The laundress, nearly as much agitated as her master, instantly started off as she had been directed. Gammon finding no signs of returning consciousness, with a great effort managed to get his lordship into the bedroom; and had just laid him down on the bed when the footman burst into the chamber in a terrible fright. He almost jumped off the floor on catching sight of the prostrate and inanimate figure of his lord—and was for a few moments so stupefied that he could not hear Gammon ordering him to start off in quest of a doctor, which at length, however, he did,—leaving Gammon alone with his victim. For a few frightful moments, he felt as if he had murdered Lord Dredlington, and must fly for it. He pressed his hands to his forehead, as if to recall his scattered faculties.

"What is to be done?" thought

he. "Is this apoplexy? paralysis? epilepsy? or what? Will he recover? Will it affect his reason?—*Will he recover?* If so—how deal with the damning discovery he has made? Will he have sense enough to keep his own counsel? If he survive, and preserve his reason—all is right—every thing succeeds. I am his master to the end of his days!—What a horrid while they are!—Curse those doctors! The wretches! never to be found when they are wanted. He's dying before my very eyes!—How shall I say this happened? A fit, brought on by agitation occasioned—ay, that will do—by the failure of the Company. Ah—there's the newspaper he brought with him, and put into my hands," he thought, as his eye glanced at the newspaper lying on the table in the adjoining room—"This will give colour to my version of the affair!" With this, he hastily seized the paper in question, and thrust it into one of the coat-pockets of Lord Dredlington: and the moment after, in came the laundress, followed by the medical man whom she had gone in quest of; the door hardly having been closed, before a thundering knock announced the arrival of the footman with another; to both of whom Gammon, with haste and agitation, gave the account of his lordship's seizure which he had previously determined upon giving to all inquiries.—"A decided case of apoplexy," said the fat bald-headed old gentleman brought in by the laundress, and who had been forty years in practice; and he proceeded hastily to raise the Earl into a nearly sitting posture, directing the windows to be thrown open as widely as possible. "Clearly paralysis," said the spectacled young gentleman who had been fetched by the footman, and who had been established in practice only a fortnight; was hot from the hospitals; and had opened a little surgery nearly opposite to that of the old gentleman.

"It isn't, sir—it's apoplexy."

"Sir, it's nearer epilepsy"—

"Listen to his breathing, sir," said the old gentleman scornfully.

"For God's sake, gentlemen, do

something!" interposed Gammon furiously—"Good God! would you have his lordship die before your eyes?"

"Put his feet into hot water instantly—get mustard plasters ready," commenced the old gentleman in a mighty bustle, turning up his coat-sleeves, and getting out his lancets; while the young gentleman, with an indignant air, still resolved to give the distinguished patient the advantage of the newest improvements in medical science, whipped out a stethoscope, and was screwing it together, when the old gentleman in a rage, cried "Pish!" and knocked it out of his hand: whereupon the young gentleman seemed disposed to strike him!

"Oh my God!" cried Gammon—and added, addressing the footman—"set off for Doctor Bailey instantly—these fools will let him die before their eyes!" Off sprang the man, and was out of sight in a twinkling. 'Twas very natural, though, I must own, somewhat inconvenient and unseemly, for these worthy rivals to behave in this way, seeing it was the first time in his life that either had been called in to a nobleman, and probably it would be the last—at least it ought to have been; and each wished to cure, or kill, the distinguished patient, in his own way. 'Twas also the conflict between the old and the new systems of medical science; between old Practice, and young Speculation—and between these two stools was his lordship indeed falling to the ground. One felt the pulse, while the other insisted on applying the stethoscope to his heart; one remarked on the coldness of the extremities—the other said the pupils were fixed and dilated. One was for bleeding at the arm, the other for opening the jugular vein: one for cupping at the nape of the neck—the other on the temple; one spoke of electricity—'twould stimulate the nervous system to throw off the blood from the brain;—the other said 'stimulate the whole surface—wrap him in a mustard plaster from head to foot, and shave and blister the head.'

One verily believed his lordship was dying; the other declared he was dead already, through *his* mode of treatment not having been adopted. Each would have given twenty guineas to have been the only one called in. All this horrid foolery occupied far less time than is requisite to describe it—scarcely a minute indeed—and almost drove Gammon into a frenzy. Rushing to the window, he called to a porter in the inn to start off for "any other medical man who could be found!"—which brought the two to their senses, such as they were.

Suffice it to say, that the jugular vein was opened in a trice; mustard plasters and hot water applied as quickly as they could be procured; and a cupping-case having been sent for, blood was taken pretty freely from the nape of the neck—and these two blood-lettings saved Lord Dredlington's life—whether to Gammon's delight, or disappointment, I shall not take upon me to decide. By the time that the great man—the experienced and skilful king's physician, Dr Bailey—had arrived, the Earl was beginning to exhibit slight symptoms of returning consciousness, and was recovering from an attack of partial apoplexy. Dr Bailey remained with his lordship for nearly half an hour; and, on leaving, gave it as his opinion that, provided no fresh seizure occurred during the ensuing two hours, it would be practicable—as it was, of course, very desirable—to remove his lordship to his own house. The period named having passed without his lordship's having experienced any relapse, it was determined to remove him. He was to be accompanied by one of the medical men—both would fain have gone, had the chariot admitted of it; but Gammon soon settled the matter by naming the elder practitioner, and dismissing the younger with a couple of guineas. Then Gammon himself set off in a hackney-coach, about an hour before the carriage started, in order to prepare the household of the Earl, and secure a safe communication of the alarming event to the Lady Cecilia.

On reaching the Earl's mansion, to Gammon's surprise a hackney-coach was driving off from before the door; and, on entering the house, guess his amazement at hearing, from the agitated porter, that Lady Cecilia had just gone up to the drawing-room, in terrible trouble. Gammon darted upstairs, unable to imagine by what means Lady Cecilia could have been apprised of the event. He found her in out-door costume, sitting sobbing on the sofa, attended anxiously by Miss Macspleuchan. The plain fact was, that she had just been driven out of her own house by a couple of executions, put in that morning by two creditors of Titmouse, by whom they had been treated, the evening before, very insolently! Mr Gammon's agitated appearance alarmed Miss Macspleuchan, but was not noticed by her more distressed companion; and, as soon as Mr Gammon found the means of doing it unobserved, he made a sign to Miss Macspleuchan that he had something of great importance to communicate to her. Leaving the Lady Cecilia, a short time afterwards, in the care of her maid, Miss Macspleuchan followed Mr Gammon down stairs into the library, and was in a few hurried words apprised of the illness of the Earl—of the cause of it—the sudden failure of an important speculation in which the Earl was interested, and that his lordship would be brought home in about an hour's time or so, in company with a medical man. Miss Macspleuchan was for a moment quite overcome; but, being a woman of superior strength of character, she soon rallied, and immediately addressed herself to the necessity of warding off any sudden and violent shock from Lady Cecilia, especially with reference to her delicate state of health. It was absolutely necessary, however, that her ladyship should be promptly apprised of the painful occurrence, lest an infinitely greater shock should be inflicted on her by the Earl's arrival. Gently and gradually as Miss Macspleuchan broke the intelligence to Lady Cecilia, it occasioned her

falling into a swoon—for it will be borne in mind that her nerves had been before sufficiently shaken. On recovering, she requested Mr Gammon to be sent for, and with considerable agitation inquired into the occasion and manner of the Earl's illness. As soon as he had mentioned that it was a paragraph in the day's paper that first occasioned in the Earl the agitation which had induced such serious consequences—

"What! in the papers already? Is it about that wretch Mr Titmouse?" she inquired, with a languid air of disgust.

"No indeed, Lady Cecilia, Mr Titmouse has nothing to do with it," replied Gammon, with a slight inward spasm; and, just as he had succeeded in giving her to understand the cause to which he chose to refer the Earl's illness, carriage-wheels were heard, followed in a second or two by a tremendous thundering at the door, which made even Gammon almost start from his chair, and threw Lady Cecilia into a second swoon. It was providential, perhaps, that it had that effect; for had she gone to the windows, and seen her insensible father, with care and difficulty, lifted out of his carriage—his shirt-collar, and a white neck-handkerchief, thrown round his shoulders, partially crimsoned; and in that way, amid a little crowd which had suddenly gathered round, carried into the house, and borne up-stairs to his bedchamber—it might have had a very serious effect, indeed, upon her ladyship. Gammon stepped for an instant to the window—he saw the poor old peer in the state I have described, and the sight blanched his cheeks. Leaving her ladyship in the hands of Miss Macspleuchan, and her attendants, he followed into the Earl's bedroom; and was a little relieved, some quarter of an hour afterwards, at finding, that, though the Earl was much exhausted with the fatigue of removal, he was in a more satisfactory state than could have been anticipated. As his lordship a own physician, who had been summoned instantly on the Earl's

arrival home, intimated that a little repose was essential to his lordship, and that no one should remain in the room whose services were not indispensable, Gammon took his departure.

ture, after an anxious inquiry as to Lady Cecilia — intending to return before night, personally to ascertain the state of the Earl and her ladyship.

CHAPTER III.

THE EARL OF DREDDLINGTON'S BED-SIDE; AND GAMMON'S INTERVIEW WITH THE DUKE OF TANTALLAN.

A MIGHTY sigh escaped from the oppressed bosom of Gammon, as soon as, having quitted the house of the Earl of Dreddlington, he found himself in the street, alone. He walked for some minutes straight on, irresolute as to whether he should direct his steps — to his own chambers, to the office in Hatton Garden, or to Mr Titmouse's residence in Park Lane. At length he determined on returning, in the first instance, to his own chambers, and bent his steps accordingly ; his mind so absorbed in thought, that he scarcely saw any one whom he met or passed. *Here* was a state of things, thought he, which he had brought about ! And what must be his own course now ? For a moment or two he was in a state of feeling which we may compare to that of a person who, with ignorant curiosity, has set in motion the machinery of some prodigious engine, which it required but a touch to effect—and then stands suddenly paralysed—bewildered—confounded at the complicated movements going on all around him, and perhaps the alarming noises accompanying them—not daring to move a hair's-breadth in any direction for fear of destruction. He soon, however, recovered himself, and began seriously to contemplate the perilous position in which he was undoubtedly placed.

Here was Lord Dreddlington, in the

first place, involved to a most alarming extent, in respect of his connection with one of the bubble companies, into an alliance with which it was Gammon alone who had seduced him. But he quickly lost sight of that, as a light matter compared with what had subsequently happened, and the prodigious consequences to which it might possibly lead—and that, too, immediately.

This crisis had been precipitated by an accident—an occurrence which he felt—and that, too, with a sort of consolation—that no man could have foreseen or calculated upon. Certainly it might all be traced to his own oversight in leaving the conveyance of his rent-charge, so all-important a document, upon his table, though for only a minute or two's absence ; for he had not quitted his chambers more than five minutes before he had re-entered them, finding the Earl of Dreddlington there—of all persons in the world the last whom he would have wished to be aware of the existence of such an instrument. Who could have imagined—calculated on such an occurrence ? Never before had the Earl visited him at his own private residence ; and to have come just precisely at the moment—And yet, thought Gammon, almost starting back a step or two—when one came to think of it—what was more likely than that, on seeing the para-

graph in the morning paper, his lordship should have done the very thing he had, and driven down to Mr Gammon for an explanation? Bah! thought Mr Gammon, and stamped his foot on the pavement.

[Ay, Satan, it was a somewhat slippery trick which you had played this staunch acute friend of yours!]

"But the thing is done; and what am I now to do? What can I do? First of all, there's Titmouse—where is that little miscreant at this moment? Will he follow his wife to Grosvenor Square? Will the Earl have recovered, before I can see Titmouse, sufficiently to recollect what has happened? Will they allow him to be admitted into the sick-chamber? Suppose his presence should remind the Earl of what he has this day heard? Should he recover his senses —what course will he take? Will he acquaint his daughter that she is married to a vulgar bastard—oh, frightful!—she, and he, the proudest two persons, perhaps, living! Will they spurn him from them with loathing and horror?—expose the little impostor to the world?—and take God knows what steps against *me*, for the share I have had in the matter?—Oh, impossible!—inconceivable! They can never blazon their own degradation to the world! Or will Lord Dredlington have discretion and self-command sufficient to keep the blighting secret to himself? Will he rest satisfied with my statement, or insist on conclusive proof and corroboration? Will he call for vouchers—ah!" here he ground his teeth together, for he recollects the trick which Titmouse had played him, in destroying the precious documents already spoken of. "If the little wretch do not hear of what has happened from any one else, shall I tell him that I have communicated his secret to Lord Dredlington? Fancy him and his wife meeting, after they know all!—or him, and the Earl! Suppose the Earl should die—and without having disclosed this secret to any one? Oh,"—Gammon here heaved a deep sigh—"what a god-

send would that be! All straight then, to the end of the chapter!—How near it was, this morning!—If I had but suffered those two boohies to wrangle together till it was too late!"—A little colour came into Mr Gammon's cheek at this point—as if he felt that possibly he was then going a trifle too far, in entertaining such very—decisive—wishes and regrets: still he could not dismiss the reflection; nay, what was more probable, than that so desperate a shock, suffered by a man of his advanced years, might be only the precursor of a second and fatal fit of apoplexy?—Gammon recollects, hopefully, that Doctor Bailey had expressed some fears of that sort to-day.

If Mr Gammon had seen the watchful eyes at that moment settled upon him, by two persons who were approaching him, and who passed him unobserved; and could have dreamed of the errand which had brought those two persons into that part of the town—it might have set his busy brain upon quite a new track of harassing conjecture, and apprehension. But he was far too intently occupied with his thoughts to notice any one, as he walked slowly down Holborn; and some five minutes afterwards, having got to within a hundred yards of Saffron Hill, he was startled out of his meditations by hearing a voice calling out his name—and looking towards the middle of the street, whence the sound came, beheld Mr Titmouse, beckoning to him eagerly, out of a hackney-coach, which was slowly driving in the contrary direction, and at Titmouse's bidding, drew up to the ker-stone.

"Oh—I say! Mr Gammon!—pon my life—here's a precious mess!—Such a devil of a row!"—commenced Titmouse alarmedly, speaking in a low voice through the coach window.

"What, sir?" inquired Gammon sternly.

"Why, eh? heard of it? Lady Cicely"—

"I have heard of it, sir," replied Gammon gloomily—"and I have, in my turn, something of far greater

consequence to tell you.—Let the coachman turn back and drive you to my chambers, where I will meet you in a quarter of an hour's time."

"Oh Lord! Won't you get in and tell me now?—Do, Mr Gam"—

"No, sir!" replied Gammon, almost fiercely, and walked away, leaving Titmouse in a pretty fright.

"Now, shall I tell him, or not?" thought Gammon: and after some minutes' anxious consideration, determined upon doing so—and on threatening him, that if he did not change his courses, so far as money went, he—Gammon—would instantly expose his real character and circumstances, to the whole world.

What might be the actual extent of his embarrassments, Gammon knew not, nor was he aware of the fact, that Titmouse was at that moment getting into the hands of swindling money-lenders. In point of dress and manners, he was the same that he had ever been, since fortune had given him the means of dressing according to his fancy, and the fashion; but any one looking at his face, could see in the slightly bloodshot eye, its jaded expression, and the puffy appearance of his face, the results of systematic excess and debauchery. When Gammon joined him at his chambers, and told him the events of the day, Titmouse exhibited affright, that to any other beholder than one so troubled as Gammon, would have appeared ludicrous; but as that gentleman's object was to subdue and terrify his companion into an implicit submission to his will, he dismissed him for the day, simply enjoining him to keep away from Grosvenor Square and Park Lane till an early hour in the ensuing morning—by which time events, which might have happened in the interval, might determine the course which Gammon should dictate to Titmouse. At that time Gammon was strongly inclined to insist on Titmouse's going to the Continent for a little while, to be out of harm's way; but, in fact, he felt dreadfully embarrassed to know how to dispose of Titmouse—regarding him with feel-

ings, perhaps, akin to some of those with which Frankenstein beheld his monster.

The remedies resorted to so speedily after Lord Dredlington's seizure at Mr Gammon's chambers, had materially counteracted the effects of the terrible shock which he had sustained; and which, but for such interference, would in all probability have proved fatal. Shortly after being removed to his own house, he sank into tranquil and salutary sleep, which continued, with a few interruptions, for several hours—during which his brain recovered itself, in a considerable measure, from the sudden and temporary pressure which it had experienced.

Towards seven o'clock in the evening, there were sitting, on one side of the bed, Miss Macspleuchan, and on the other, the Lady Cecilia—who also had rallied from the shock which she had sustained, and now, occasionally shedding tears, sat gazing in melancholy silence at the countenance of her father. She was certainly a miserable young woman—was Lady Cecilia—ignorant though she might be, of the real extent of disaster consequent upon her alliance with Titmouse, whom she had long hated and despised, on all occasions avoiding his company. Their almost total estrangement was indeed notorious in society.

His lordship's physician had quitted the chamber for a few minutes, to make arrangements for continuing with him during the night; and neither Miss Macspleuchan nor Lady Cecilia had spoken for some time. At length the Earl, who had become rather restless, faintly muttered at intervals to himself the words—

"Bubble—villain—Blackwall"—

"You see," whispered Miss Macspleuchan, "what he's thinking of. He dined with those people, you know." Lady Cecilia nodded in silence. Presently his lordship resumed—

"*Account Closed!*—Call on Mr Gammon—Is Mr Gammon at home?"—

The current of his recollections had now brought him to the point of danger; and after pausing for a moment, a troubled expression came over his

face—he was evidently realising the commencement of the terrible scene in Mr Gammon's room—then he seemed to have lost the train of his thoughts for a while, as his features slowly resumed their previous placidity; but the troubled aspect presently returned: his lips were suddenly compressed, and his brow corrugated, as if with the emotion of anger or indignation.

"Monstrous! *Two thousand pounds?*" He spoke these words in a much stronger voice than those preceding.

"Oh, dear!—I should have thought his lordship had lost much more than *that*," whispered Miss Macspleuchan in a low tone.

"Insist!—Titmouse—Titmouse"—his lips slightly quivered, and he paused for a while. "Shocking! What will she"—an expression of agony came over his face.

"Poor papa! He's evidently heard it all!" whispered Lady Cecilia faintly.

"Hush!" exclaimed Miss Macspleuchan, raising her finger to her lips—adding presently, "if he goes on in this way, I shall go and bring in Dr Whittington."

"Cecilia!—Cecilia!"—continued the Earl; and suddenly opening his eyes, gazed forward, and on each side, with a dull confused stare. Then he closed them, muttering—"I certainly thought Mr Gammon was here!" Shortly afterwards he opened them again; and his head being inclined towards the side where Lady Cecilia was sitting, they fell upon, and seemed to be arrested by her countenance. After gazing at her for some moments very sorrowfully, he again closed his eyes, murmuring—"Poor Cecilia!"

"I really think, my dear, you'd better leave the room," faltered Miss Macspleuchan; imagining, from the state of her own feelings, that those of Lady Cecilia would be overpowering her—for nothing could be more soul-touching than the tone in which the Earl had last spoken.

"No; he's asleep again," replied Lady Cecilia calmly—and for a quarter of an hour all was again silent.

Then the Earl sighed; and, opening his eyes, looked full at Lady Cecilia, and with a more natural expression.

"Kiss me, Cecilia," said he gently; and raising both his arms a little, while she leaned forward and kissed his forehead, he feebly placed them round her, but they almost immediately sank on the bed again, as if he had not strength to keep them extended.

"We will live together, Cecilia, again," murmured the Earl.

"Dear papa, don't distress yourself; if you do, I really must go away from you."

"No, no; you must not, Cecilia," murmured the Earl sadly and faintly, and shaking his head.

"Have you seen him to day?" he presently asked, with a little more energy, as if he were becoming more and more thoroughly awake, and aware of his position; and there was a marked difference in the expression of his eye—partly perplexed, partly alarmed.

"No, papa—I left the moment it happened, and came here; and have been here ever since. Do, dear papa, be calm!" added Lady Cecilia, with perfect composure.

"There!—I am gone blind, *again*," exclaimed the Earl suddenly, and raised his trembling hands to his eyes.

"So you knew it all?" said he presently, tremulously removing his hands, and looking up, as if the momentary obscuration of his sight had ceased.

"Oh yes, papa, of course! How could I help it? Try to go to sleep again, dear papa." There was a faint dash of petulance in her manner.

They were at terrible cross purposes.

His eye remained fixed steadily on that of his daughter. "Is it not horrible, Cecilia?" said he, with a shudder.

"Dear papa, I don't know what you mean," replied Cecilia, startled by the tone of his voice, and the look of his eye. There was nothing wild or unnatural about it. The eye seemed that of a man in his full senses, but horrified by some frightful recollection or other.

"I thought it would have killed her," he muttered, closing his eyes, while a faint flush came over his face, but that of Lady Cecilia turned deadly pale.

"Don't speak again, dear," whispered Miss Macspleuchan, herself a little startled by the Earl's manner—"he's wandering—he'll go to sleep presently."

"Yes, in my grave, madam," replied the Earl solemnly, in a hollow tone—at the same time turning towards Miss Macspleuchan an eye which suddenly blanched her face—"but even there I shall not *forget!*" She gazed at him in silence, and apprehensively, trembling from head to foot.

There ensued a pause of a minute or two.

"Oh, Cecilia!" said the Earl presently, shaking his head, and looking at her with the same terrible expression which had so startled her before—"that I had first followed you to your grave!"

"My dear papa, you are only dreaming!"

"No, I am not. Oh! how can you, Cecilia, be so calm here, when you know that you have married a"—

Lady Cecilia glanced hurriedly at Miss Macspleuchan, who, having risen a little from her chair, was leaning forward in an agitated manner, and straining her ear to catch every word—

"What are you talking about, papa?" gasped Lady Cecilia, while her face became of a deadly whiteness.

"Why, I thought you knew it all," said the Earl, sustained and stimulated by the intensity of his feelings—"that this Titmouse—is—Mr Gammon has acknowledged all—an infamous impostor—an illegitimate"—

Miss Macspleuchan, with a faint shriek, rang the hell at the bed-head violently; but before she or any one else could reach her, Lady Cecilia had fallen heavily on the floor, where she lay unconsciously, her maid falling down over her as she rushed into the room, alarmed by the sudden and violent ringing of the bell. All was confusion and horror. Lady Cecilia was instantly carried out insensible; the

Earl was found to have been seized with a second fit of apoplexy. Dr Bailey was quickly in attendance, followed soon after by an eminent accoucheur, whom it had been found necessary to send for, Lady Cecilia's illness having assumed the most alarming character conceivable. When Miss Macspleuchan had in some measure recovered from her distraction, she despatched a servant to implore the instant attendance of the Duke and Duchess of Tantallan, unable to bear the overwhelming horror occasioned to her by the statement of the Earl of Dreddlington; and which, whether so astounding and frightful a statement was founded in fact or not, and only a delusion of the Earl's, was likely to have given the unfortunate Lady Cecilia her deathblow.

Both the Duke and Duchess, the nearest relatives of the Earl then in London, the Duke being his brother-in-law, were, within half an hour, at Lord Dreddlington's, and made acquainted with the mysterious and fearful occasion of what had happened. The Duke and Duchess were quite as proud and haughty people as Lord Dreddlington; but the Duke was a little—and only a little—the Earl's superior in point of understanding. When first told of what the Earl had said, as if it were an ascertained fact, his horror knew no bounds. But when he came to inquire into the matter, and found that it rested on no other foundation than the distempered wanderings of a man whose brain was at the time labouring under the effects of an apoplectic seizure, he began to feel a great relief; especially when Miss Macspleuchan could mention no single circumstance corroboratory of so amazing and frightful a representation. At her suggestion, the Duke, unable to render any personal service to the Earl, who was in the hands of the physicians, hurried home again, and sent off a special messenger to Mr Gammon, whose address Miss Macspleuchan had given him, with the following note:—

"The Duke of Tantallan presents his compliments to Mr Gammon, and

earnestly entreats that he will, without a moment's delay, favour the Duke with a call in Portman Square, on business of the last importance.

"*Portman Square,*
"Wednesday Evening, 9 o'clock."

A huge servant of the Duke's—with powdered hair, silver epaulettes, dark crimson coat, and white breeches, having altogether a sufficiently splendid appearance—created something like a sensation in the immediate neighbourhood of Thavies' Inn, by inquiring, with an impatient and excited air, for "Thavies' Inn," and a "gentleman of the name of *Gammon*," who was therefore naturally supposed to be honoured by some special and direct communication from the King, or at least some member of the royal family. Gammon himself, who was in the act of opening his door to go out and make his promised call of inquiry in Grosvenor Square—was flustered for a moment, on finding himself stepping into the arms of such an imposing personage; who said, as he gave him the letter, on finding him to be Mr Gammon—"From the Duke of Tantallan, sir. His Grace, I believe, expects you immediately, sir."

Mr Gammon hastily opened the letter, and having glanced at the contents—"Give my compliments to his Grace, and say I will attend him immediately," said he. The man withdrew, and Gammon returned into his chamber, and sat for a few moments in the darkness, having just before put out his lamp. He burst into a cold sweat—"What is stirring now!" said he to himself. "Ah, why did I not ask the fellow?"—and starting from his feet, he rushed down stairs, and succeeded in calling back the Duke's servant just as he was quitting the inn—"Do you happen to have been into Grosvenor Square to-day? And do you know how the Earl of Dreddlington is?" inquired Gammon anxiously.

"Yes, sir; his lordship, and the Lady Cecilia Titmouse, are both dangerously ill. I believe his lordship, sir, has had a stroke—they say it's the

second he's had to-day—and her ladyship is taken in labour, and is in a shocking bad way, sir. The Duke and Duchess were sent for in a dreadful hurry about an hour ago."

"I'm sorry to hear it! Thank you," replied Gammon, hastily turning away a face which he felt exhibiting great agitation.

"It may be only to inquire about the Artificial Rain Company"—said he to himself, as, having procured a light, he poured himself out a glassful of brandy, and drank it off, to overcome a little sense of faintness, which he felt coming rapidly over him. "The Duke is a shareholder, I think. Not at all unlikely!—And as for Lady Cecilia's illness—nothing so extraordinary about it—when one considers her situation—and the shock occasioned by the Earl's sudden and alarming illness. But I must take a decided course, one way or another, with the Duke!—Suppose the Earl has disclosed the affair to Lady Cecilia—and it has got to the Duke's ears?—Good Heavens! how is one to deal with it? Suppose I were to affect total ignorance about the matter—and swear that it is altogether a delusion on the part of the Earl?—That would be rather a bold stroke, too!—Suppose the Earl to die of this bout—ah! then there's an end of the thing, and all's well, provided I can manage Titmouse!—A second fit of apoplexy within twelve hours—that looks well—humph!—If the Earl have mentioned the affair—and distinctly and intelligibly—how far has he gone?—Did he name the rent-charge?—Ah!—well, and suppose he did? What's easier than also to deny that altogether? But suppose Titmouse should be tampered with, and pressed about the business? Perdition!—all is lost!—Yet they would hardly like to defy me, and trumpet the thing abroad!—Then there's the other course—to own that I am in possession of the fatal secret—that I became so only recently; avow the reason of my taking the rent-charge; and insist upon retaining it, as the condition of my secrecy? That also is a bold stroke: both are

bold!—Yet one of them I must choose!—Then, suppose the Earl to recover: he will never be the same man he was—that I find is always the case—his mind, such as it is, will go nearly altogether!—But if he recover only a glimmering even of sense—egad! 'twill require a little nerve, too, to deny the thing to his face, and swear that the whole thing is the delusion of a brain disordered by previous fright!—And suppose Lady Cecilia dies?—and leaves no issue?—and then Lord Dredlington follows her—by Heavens, this hideous little devil becomes Lord Drelincourt at once!!"

This was the way in which Mr Gammon turned the thing over in his disturbed mind, as he walked rapidly towards Portman Square; and by the time that he had reached the Duke's house, he had finally determined on the course he should pursue. Though his face was rather pale, he was perfectly self-possessed and firm, at the moment of being shown into the library, where the Duke was walking about, impatient for his arrival.

"Gracious God, sir!"—commenced the Duke in a low tone, with much agitation of manner, the moment that the servant had closed the door behind him—"what is all this horrible news we hear about Mr Titmouse?"

"Horrible news—about Mr Titmouse?" echoed Gammon amazedly—"pardon me—I don't understand your Grace! If you allude to the two executions, which I'm sorry to hear"—

"Pho, sir! you are trifling! Believe me, this is an awful moment to all persons involved in what has taken place!" replied the Duke, his voice quivering with emotion.

"Your Grace will excuse me, but I really cannot comprehend you!"—

"You soon shall, sir! I tell you, it may be a matter of infinite moment to yourself personally, Mr Gammon!"

"What does your Grace mean?" inquired Gammon respectfully, but firmly—and throwing an expression of still greater amazement into his face.

"Mean, sir? By——! that you have killed my Lord Dredlington and the Lady Cecilia," cried the Duke, violently.

"I wait to hear, as soon as your Grace may condescend to explain," said Gammon calmly.

"Explain, sir? Why, I have already told and explained everything!" replied the choleric Duke, who imagined that he really had done so.

"Your Grace has told—has explained, nothing whatever," said Gammon.

"Why, sir—I mean, what's this horrible story you've been telling my Lord Dredlington about Mr Titmouse being—in plain English, sir—a BASTARD?"

If the Duke had struck at Gammon, the latter could not have started back more suddenly and violently than he did, on hearing his Grace utter the last word; and he remained gazing at the Duke with a face full of horror and bewilderment. The spectacle which he presented, arrested the Duke's increasing excitement. He stared open-mouthed at Gammon, presently adding—"Why sir, are we both—are we all—mad? or dreaming? or what has come to us?"

"I think," replied Gammon, a little recovering from the sort of stupor into which the Duke's words had apparently thrown him, "it is I who have a better title than your Grace to ask the question!—I tell Lord Dredlington that Mr Titmouse is a bastard! Why, I can hardly credit my ears! Does my Lord Dredlington say that I have told him so?"

"He does, sir!" replied the Duke fiercely.

"And what else may his lordship have said concerning me?" inquired Gammon with a sort of hopeless smile.

"By Heaven, sir, you mustn't treat this matter lightly!" said the Duke impetuously, approaching him suddenly.

"May I ask your Grace whether this is the matter mentioned in your Grace's note, as of the"—

"It is, sir! it is!—and it's killed

my Lord Dredlington—and also the Lady Cecilia!"

"What!" cried Gammon, starting and exhibiting increasing amazement—"does her ladyship, too, say that I have told her so?"

"Yes, sir: she does!"

"What, Lady Cecilia?" echoed Gammon, really confounded.

"Well, sir—I think she did"—

"Think, your Grace!" interrupted Gammon, bitterly and reproachfully.

"Well, sir—certainly the fact is, I may be mistaken as to that matter. I was not present; but, at all events, my Lord Dredlington certainly says you told him—and he's told Lady Cecilia—and it's killing her—it is, sir!—By Heavens, sir, I expect hourly to hear of both of their deaths!—and I beg to ask you, sir, once for all, have you ever made any such statement to my Lord Dredlington?"

"Not a syllable—never a breath of the sort, in all my life!" replied Gammon boldly, and rather sharply, as if indignant at being pressed about anything so absurd.

"What!—nothing of the sort? or to that effect?" exclaimed the Duke with mingled amazement and incredulity.

"Certainly—certainly not!—But let me ask, in my turn, is the fact so? Does your Grace mean to say that?"

"No, sir," interrupted the Duke, but not speaking in his former confident tone—"but my Lord Dredlington does!"

"Oh, impossible! impossible!" cried Gammon, with an incredulous air—"Only consider for one moment—how could the fact possibly be so, and I not know it? Why, I am familiar with every step of his pedigree!" The Duke drummed vehemently with his finger on the table, and stared at Gammon with the air of a man suddenly and completely nonplussed.

"Why, Mr Gammon, then my Lord Dredlington must have completely lost his senses! He declares that you told him that such was the fact!—When and where, may I ask, did you first see him to-day?"

"About half-past eleven or twelve.

o'clock, when he called at my chambers in a state of the greatest agitation and excitement, occasioned by the announcement in this morning's paper of the sudden blow-up of the Artificial"—

"Good Heaven! why, is *that* gone?" interrupted his Grace, eagerly and alarmedly, starting up from his seat—"When? why? how?—By Heaven, it's enough to turn any one's head!"

"Indeed it is, your Grace. My Lord Dredlington was the first from whom I heard anything on the subject."

"It's very odd I didn't see the paragraph! Where was it? In the *Morning Growl*?" continued the Duke, with much agitation.

"It was, your Grace—it stated that Sir Sharper Bubble had suddenly absconded, with all the funds of"—

"Oh, the villain! oh, the villain!—But why do you make such scoundrels chairmen, and treasurers, and so forth? How must the loss be made good? You really don't look sharp enough after people whom you put into such situations! Who the deuce is this fellow—this Sir Bubble Sharper, or whatever he is called—eh?"

"He was greatly respected in the City, or would not have been in the position he was. Who could have suspected it?"

"And is the thing quite blown up? All gone?"

"Yes, I fear it is, indeed!" replied Gammon, shrugging his shoulders and sighing.

"Of course no one can be made liable—come the worst to the worst, eh?" inquired the Duke anxiously, "beyond the amount of his shares? How's that, Mr Gammon?"

"I devoutly trust not! Your Grace will observe that it depends a good deal on the prominence which any one takes in the affair."

"Egad! is that the principle? Then, I assure you, Mr Gammon, upon my word of honour, that I have not taken the least public part in the proceedings"—

"I am happy to hear it, your Grace. Nor have I—but I fear that my Lord

Dreddlington may have gone further a good deal"—

"I've several times warned him on the subject, I assure you. By the way, there's that other affair, Mr Gammon, I hope—eh?—the Gunpowder and Fresh Water"—

"Good Heavens, your Grace! I hope all is right there—or I, for one, am a ruined man!" replied Gammon quickly.

"I—I—hope so too, sir.—So Lord Dreddlington was a good deal shocked, eh, this morning?"

"Yes, indeed he was—nay, I may say, terribly excited! I was greatly alarmed on his account, directly I saw him."

"And is this Mr Titmouse—eh?—involved in the thing?"

"I really can't tell, your Grace—his movements are somewhat eccentric—it's extremely difficult to discover or account for them! By the way, I recollect, now, that I did mention his name to Lord Dreddlington.

"Ah, indeed! What about?" interrupted his Grace briskly.

"Why, I just heard that early this morning there would be one or two executions put into his house—he's been going on lately in a very wild way."

"Oh, he's a monstrous little—but was that all that passed between you and my Lord Dreddlington about him?"

"I will undertake to say," replied Gammon pausing, putting his finger to his lips, and appearing to try to recollect—"that that was the only mention made of his name, for soon after his lordship was seized with a fit," and Mr Gammon proceeded to give the Duke a vivid and feeling description of it.

"What a singular hallucination his lordship must be labouring under, to make such an assertion concerning me as he appears to have made!" presently observed Gammon.

"Very!" replied the Duke gravely, still feeling serious misgivings on the subject; but what could he either say, or do, further, after the solemn, explicit, and repeated denials of Mr

Gammon? His Grace then gave him an account of what he had heard as to the mode of Lord Dreddlington's seizure, and that of Lady Cecilia; and as he went on, Gammon quivered from head to foot—and it required all his extraordinary powers of self-command to conceal his excessive agitation from the Duke.

"By the way, where is Mr Titmouse?" inquired the Duke, as he rose, after saying that he was going on immediately to Grosvenor Square. "I have sent to Park Lane, and find that he has not been there since the morning."

"I really don't know, I assure your Grace. I have not seen him for several days. If his affairs are as seriously involved as your Grace would intimate, he may probably be keeping out of the way!"

"Do let me beg of you to take the trouble of inquiring after him to-morrow morning, Mr Gammon. He must be much shocked to hear of the lamentable condition of Lady Cecilia!"

"Indeed I will, I assure your Grace: I only hope he may not have gone over to the Continent."

"God bless my soul, but I hope not!" interrupted the Duke earnestly; and added, after one or two other observations, "then I understand you as stating, Mr Gammon, that there is not the least pretence or foundation, in point of fact, for the representation which my Lord Dreddlington has made concerning you, with reference to Mr Titmouse—excuse me—is it so, upon your word of honour?"

"Upon my sacred word of honour!" replied Gammon steadfastly; and shortly afterwards, bowing to the Duke, took his leave, promising to call on his Grace early on the morrow, and to make every exertion to see Mr Titmouse—whom Mr Gammon was now, indeed, devouringly anxious to see, and would have made almost any sacrifice to be enabled to fall in with him that very night. For,—how much now depended on Titmouse!—On the manner in which he would deal with such questions as would infallibly be asked of him by the Duke, and

by any one else who might have heard of the rumour! In short, Gammon was quite distracted by doubts and fears, as he bent his way back to his chambers, not venturing, after what he had heard, to call in Grosvenor Square that evening, lest he should hear fatal news of either the Earl, or Lady Cecilia—that is, of either, or both, of his *victims!* The next morning, the following announcement of the Earl's illness appeared in most of the morning papers, and created quite a sensation in "society":—

"SUDDEN AND ALARMING ILLNESS OF THE EARL OF DREDDLINGTON AND LADY CECILIA TITMOUSE."—Yesterday, while sitting in the office of his solicitor, the Earl of Dreddlington experienced an apoplectic seizure of a serious nature, and which, but for prompt and decisive medical treatment, must have proved immediately fatal. His lordship rallied sufficiently during the course of the day to admit of his being conveyed to his house in Grosvenor Square, but in the evening experienced a second and still more alarming fit, and continues in a state calculated to excite the greatest apprehension. We regret also to add, that Lady Cecilia Titmouse, his lordship's only daughter, happening to be with his lordship at the moment of this sudden attack, was immediately seized with illness; which, in her ladyship's critical state of health, may be attended with serious consequences."

In the evening papers, it was stated that the Earl of Dreddlington still continued in a precarious condition, and that Lady Cecilia was not expected to survive the night; and the in-

stant that Mr Gammon laid his hands on the next morning's paper, he turned with eagerness and trepidation to a certain gloomy corner of it—and a faint momentary mist came over his eyes, while he read as follows:—

"Yesterday, in Grosvenor Square, in her 29th year, after giving premature birth to a son, still-born, Lady Cecilia Titmouse, the lady of Titblebat Titmouse, Esq., M.P., and only daughter and heiress of the Right Honourable the Earl of Dreddlington."

Mr Gammon laid down the paper, and for some moments felt overcome with a deadly faintness. Having, however, recovered himself a little, on casting a hasty apprehensive glance over the newspaper, for intelligence of the Earl of Dreddlington, he read as follows:—

"The Earl of Dreddlington, we regret to say, continues alarmingly ill. Drs Bailey and Whittington are in constant attendance upon his lordship. Our readers will see, in another part of our paper, the melancholy announcement of the death of his lordship's lovely and accomplished daughter, Lady Cecilia Titmouse, after giving premature birth to a son, still-born. We regret to hear it rumoured, that the illness of his lordship originated in a shock occasioned by circumstances of a very painful nature; but this report, we trust, will turn out to be unfounded. In the event of his lordship's lamented demise, he is succeeded in his titles and estates by his son-in-law, and heir, upon the death of the Lady Cecilia, Mr Titmouse, M.P. for Yatton."

CHAPTER IV.

LORD DE LA ZOUCH COMES ON THE SCENE AGAIN; AN ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S SUGGESTION; AND GAMMON FRIGHTENED BY HIS OWN PROCTOR.

It will surely be a relief to one's feelings to pass away, for a while at least, from the contemplation of these events of untoward and disastrous issue, to persons and to incidents of a different description. Turn, therefore, considerate reader! your eye to that retreat of long-suffering virtue, which is to be found in Vivian Street!

Relieved from the immediate pressure which had, as it were, forced him down into the very dust, poor Aubrey's pious and well-disciplined mind was not long in recovering that tone of confident reliance upon the goodness and mercy of God, which He had seen fit so severely to try; and such He now permitted Aubrey to see, had been His object. He and his beloved wife and sister soon recovered a considerable measure of composure, and even cheerfulness; yet felt they all in the deep waters. The timely interposition of Mr Runnington had secured them, indeed, a few months' respite from the harassing attacks of those who seemed bent upon their destruction; but what was to become of them all, when the arrival of the next term should have again set into motion the potent machinery of law? None of them could foresee any mode of exit from their troubles; speculation was idle; but they lost not a trembling hope that Providence would yet make a way for their escape.

Of all the recent occurrences which had shocked and disheartened Mr Aubrey, and driven him nearest to the verge of despair, that of Lady Stratton's death, and its afflicting concomitants, was the chief. How powerfully

and perseveringly did the Arch-enemy of mankind represent this circumstance to him! especially in those moods of depression to which all of us are subject, in this fluctuating scene of trial and suffering—as proof that he was the sport of chance, the victim of evil destiny! What—it was suggested—had he, his wife, his sister, done to deserve it? But, in vain were these impious suggestions from beneath; totally ineffectual

“To shake his trust in God!”

Certainly, the event alluded to baffled all his calculations, long and anxiously as he reflected upon it, in all its bearings; and his only refuge lay, in the simple reference of it to the all-wise providence of God. Oh, foolish Fiend! and didst thou really think this little matter was sufficient to make this Christian man doubt, or deny, God's moral government of the world?—Far otherwise, indeed, was it with him, enlightened by intelligence from on high; and which satisfied Aubrey, that while there was so much that was utterly incomprehensible and inexplicable in the character of God himself, in his physical and natural government of the world, it was but reasonable to expect corresponding mystery and incomprehensibility in his *moral* government of the world. We are permitted to obtain a few occasional glimpses of the one, as well as of the other—and they should satisfy us of the reality of that sublime and awful moral system, which is as surely in existence around us, as that physical one which we see, and feel.

What know we of the ultimate scope and end of His working? What seeming good shall we be sure will not produce evil? What seeming evil shall we be sure will not produce, and is not designed to produce, good? And may not our ignorance in these respects be specially ordained to test the faith of man—to check presumptuous confidence—to repel palsying despair; in a word, to make man *walk humbly with his God*, in constant and implicit dependence upon him? Oh, blessed is the man of true devoutness of mind, and protected from innumerable troubles and perils that assail and overpower those who choose to live *without God in the world!*—Thus was it that Aubrey, as he had not presumed in his prosperity, so despaired not in his adversity.

He had commenced a sedulous attendance at the chambers of Mr Mansfield, within a few days after the delicate kindness of Mr Runnington had afforded him the means of doing so. He already knew sufficient to inspire him with interest in the intricate system of the law of real property; and the immediate practical operation of its principles, which he witnessed in his new scene of study, while enabling him to appreciate its importance and value, convinced him of the oppressive, obsolete, and utterly useless subtleties which rendered it inapplicable to modern exigencies; and a great multitude of which have since been abrogated by an enlightened legislature. In addition, however, to his absorbing professional labours, Mr Aubrey continued his occasional contributions to substantial literature; but Mr Runnington's generosity had enabled him to dispense with that severe and incessant exertion to which he had been till then accustomed, and to address himself to his difficult yet delightful studies, with undivided energy.

Some short time after he had commenced his attendance at Mr Mansfield's chambers, Mr Aubrey was, one morning about ten o'clock, on his way down to Lincoln's Inn, and when about to cross Piccadilly, paused to

allow a dusty post-chaise and four, dashing up St James's Street, to pass him; and as it went close and rapidly by him, he started with astonishment; for, unless his eyes had extraordinarily deceived him, he had seen in that chaise no other a person than Lord De la Zouch: who, however, if it were he, had not appeared to see Mr Aubrey.

"Why, how can this be?" thought Aubrey, standing and gazing for a moment in astonishment after the disappearing dust-covered vehicle. "The letter which Agnes received the other day from Lady De la Zouch, did not say a word about Lord De la Zouch's intention to return to England! And alone!—And in a post-chaise—and travelling all night, as he evidently has, from Dover! 'Tis strange! What can be the matter?"—And he stood for a moment irresolute, whether or not he should retrace his steps, and satisfy his curiosity by calling at the house of Lord De la Zouch, in Dover Street. On consideration, he determined not to do so. He might be mistaken; but if not, Lord De la Zouch might have been called back to England on a matter of special urgency, and possibly deem a visit from any one, except those whom he expected to see, intrusive. Aubrey, therefore, continued his way on to Lincoln's Inn; and was in Mr Mansfield's chambers soon engrossed with the matters to which he addressed himself. 'Twas the Will of a wealthy Dust-contractor; with a view to the preparation of which interesting document, voluminous instructions of his lay before Mr Aubrey, consisting of a great multiplicity of complicated and inconsistent provisions and objects, with a view to effectuating at once the spite and the ambition of the dying testator!—It really *was*, however, Lord De la Zouch whom he had seen; and, moreover, it was solely on Aubrey's own account that his lordship, leaving Lady De la Zouch at Paris, had taken this sudden journey to England—not intending him, at all events at present, to be apprised of the fact. 'Twas entirely owing to the

unconscious Gammon — whom his treacherous friend the Devil had again led into a scrape—that Lord De la Zouch thus made his appearance in England ; for, had that gentleman not taken such special pains to have inserted in the *Morning Growl*, the elaborate account of the proceedings which he had caused to be instituted against himself, which the reader has had laid before him, and which his lordship, in due course, had read at Paris, with infinite anxiety and alarm on the score of its possible bearing upon Mr Aubrey,—his lordship would in all probability have continued at Paris for several months longer, in total ignorance of the thraldom of the unfortunate Aubreys.

The moment that his lordship had perused with lively concern the report in question, he wrote off to Mr Runnington a strictly confidential letter, begging an immediate answer, with as full and exact an account of Mr Aubrey's circumstances as Mr Runnington could give. By the next post, that gentleman wrote off to his lordship a long answer, acquainting him with what had befallen the persecuted Aubrey—viz. his double arrest, and in respect of so terrible a liability. Mr Runnington spoke in glowing terms of the fortitude of Mr Aubrey, under his accumulated misfortunes : and, in short, drew so moving a picture of the deplorable position in which he and his family were placed, that his lordship the next day wrote off to inform Mr Runnington, in confidence, that he might expect to see his lordship in London, within a day or two : that he was coming over solely on the affairs of the Aubreys—and was, in fact, resolved upon bringing about, cost what it might, either alone, or in conjunction with such other friends of Mr Aubrey as his lordship might think proper to take into his counsels, a complete and final settlement of Mr Aubrey's affairs, and so place him at once, and for ever, out of the reach of all his persecutors ; to set him once more free in the world, and afford him a fair chance of securing, by successful practice at the

bar, that affluence, and distinction, to which his high character, great talents, learning, and unconquerable energy, warranted him in aspiring. As soon as his lordship had recovered from the fatigues of his journey, he sent off a servant to request the immediate attendance of Mr Runnington — who, overjoyed, immediately obeyed the summons. But before they meet, however, let me take the opportunity of mentioning one or two little matters connected with the previous movements of Mr Runnington.

He was a first-rate man of business ; clear-headed, cautious, experienced, and singularly prompt and determined, when once he had resolved on any course of proceeding : in short, he was quite capable of contending against even the formidable Gammon, subtle, tortuous, and unscrupulous though he might be. "Let me only once get hold of Master Gammon !" thought, frequently, Mr Runnington. Now, the astounding avowal which Miss Aubrey represented Mr Gammon as having made to her—viz. that he possessed the power of immediately, and by legal means, displacing Mr Titmouse, and repossessing Mr Aubrey, of Yatton, had made a profound impression on the mind of Mr Runnington. The more that he reflected upon the incident, and upon the character of Mr Gammon, the stronger became his conviction that that gentleman — however strange that such a person should, even under the influence of love, be thrown off his guard — had been in earnest in what he had said ; that there was a foundation in fact for his assertion ; and that, if so, some scheme of profound and infernal wickedness must have been had recourse to, in order to dispossess Mr Aubrey of Yatton, and place Titmouse there, in his stead. Then Mr Runnington adverted to the circumstance of Mr Gammon's exercising such a constant control over Titmouse, and all matters connected with Yatton. Mr Runnington many and many a time pondered these things in his mind—but was, after all, completely at a loss to know what

steps to take, and how to deal with the affair, as it stood.

Then again, with reference to the death of Lady Stratton, and the melancholy circumstances attending it, Mr Runnington had entered into correspondence with Mr Parkinson, with a view to ascertaining what chance there might be of getting his draft of Lady Stratton's intended will, admitted to probate; and laid the whole affair, in the shape of a "case," before an eminent practitioner in the ecclesiastical court. The opinion he thus obtained was, however, adverse; mainly, on the ground that there was clear evidence to show a subsequent essential alteration of intention on the part of Lady Stratton—to say nothing of certain other difficulties which, the fee marked, being a liberal one, were suggested by the astute civilian. Mr Runnington was much chagrined at this result; and abandoned his design of seriously contesting Mr Titmouse's claim to administration. Still, he conceived that it could do no harm if he were just to lodge a *caveat*, even though he should there leave the matter. It might have the effect of interposing some delay; staving off any contemplated proceedings upon Mr Aubrey's bond to the late Lady Stratton; and afford an opportunity for negotiation, concerning the payment of Mr Aubrey and Miss Aubrey's shares of the property of the intestate. This step, therefore, he took—and was by no means chagrined at finding, some short time afterwards, that the astute and pertinacious Vulture Company were bent on pursuing their ordinary course, in cases of policies which rendered it worth their while—viz. not paying till they were forced to do so:—and the Company, in their turn, were only too happy to find a chance existing of a protracted dispute concerning the right to the policy. Not satisfied with this—still haunted by Mr Gammon's mysterious statement to Miss Aubrey—it all at once occurred to Mr Runnington, in the course of one of his many meditations upon the subject, to take an opportunity of dis-

cussing the affair, in all its bearings, with Sir Charles Wolstenholme; whose penetrating, practical sagacity, sharpened by friendly zeal and sympathy, might hit upon something or other undiscernible to Mr Runnington. Without therefore having intimated his intentions to Mr Aubrey, Mr Runnington, shortly after having lodged his *caveat*, succeeded in obtaining an interview with Sir Charles, expressly with a view of talking over the affairs of Mr Aubrey.

"This is one of the most remarkable things that ever came under my notice," said Sir Charles, gravely, as soon as Mr Runnington had mentioned Mr Gammon's statement to Miss Aubrey, and the circumstances accompanying it. In short, it was clear that Sir Charles was every whit as much struck with the fact as had been Mr Runnington; and for some minutes after Mr Runnington had named it, seemed lost in thought. A considerable pause here ensued in their conversation; and Mr Runnington was quite delighted to see his distinguished companion evidently engaged in turning about the facts of the case in his clear and spacious understanding; viewing them from every point in which they could be contemplated, and in all their bearings.

"I am disposed to think, that the fellow was in earnest," at length said Sir Charles; "at all events that he believed he had the power, which he professed to possess; and that he was hurried away by his insane passion for this lady, into prematurely disclosing it. Egad, he's a nice person, that Gammon, too, by the way, to think of his proposing to sweet, pretty Miss Aubrey—ah, hah!" he added, with a faint but contemptuous smile; and presently subjoined, in a musing sort of way—"I've got the general facts that came out at the trial, still pretty fresh in my mind, and have been just running over the links in his chain of proof. We could hardly have failed to detect a hitch, if there had been one! Link by link we scrutinised it—and were long enough about it, at any rate! I can

conceive, too, that in a case of that sort there was room for a little bit of perjury, if it were cleverly managed ; and Mr Gammon is a very clever man, indeed ! By the way, I'm actually going down special for him to York, in that bribery case, ah, hah ! " " Ay," he presently resumed, " I suspect that one or two of the links in that chain of his must have been of base metal.—Deuce take him ! he must have done it well, too ! " He smiled bitterly.

" If *that's* your impression, Sir Charles," said Mr Runnington eagerly, " what do you think of having a shot at them—a second ejection ! "

" Oh, by Heaven ! *that's* an awful affair, replied Sir Charles, shaking his head, and looking extremely serious ; besides, what he's done once, he may do again."

" Ah, but we know all his witnesses now beforehand ! Then we fought him in the dark ; but now"—

" Ay, there's something in that, certainly," said Sir Charles, musingly ; " but then 'tis such a frightful expense ; and where poor Aubrey's to get the means"—

" Oh, never mind that, Sir Charles ! " replied Mr Runnington, nevertheless somewhat seriously ; but thinking of Lord De la Zouch, he added rather briskly—" if you only intimate an opinion favourable towards venturing the experiment, I'll undertake that funds to any amount shall be forthcoming."

While Mr Runnington was saying this, Sir Charles Wolstenholme sat leaning back in his chair, his head inclined on one side, the fingers of one hand playing mechanically with his chin ; in fact, he was deeply engaged in thought, and Mr Runnington did not interrupt him.

" Ah," he presently exclaimed, with a sort of sigh, looking with sudden vivacity at his companion—" I have it—I have it—I think I see a way out of the wood ! Well, if you can only get ammunition, it's my advice to you to fight the battle over again—but on quite a different field. We'll strike a blow in a new hemisphere ! "

" Indeed, Sir Charles ? What, in a court of equity ?"

" Oh, pho, no !—You say you have entered a *caveat* against the grant of Letters of Administration ?"

" Yes, certainly," replied Mr Runnington, a little disappointed ; " but, as I explained, there's no chance of establishing a will."

" Never mind that ! Throw the will to the dogs. I'll show you a wrinkle worth a hundred wills ! Mr and Miss Aubrey, and apparently Titmouse, are, you know, as matters at present stand, entitled each to a third of Lady Stratton's estate ; but as Aubrey would appear to the court to be in fact insolvent, and to owe Titmouse a much larger sum than Aubrey is entitled to out of the intestate's estate—the preferable right to administer is certainly that of Titmouse. Never mind that, however. Contest his right to administer at all : stand by your *caveat*—and when you are called upon to support it, do so on the ground that Mr Aubrey is NEARER OF KIN to Lady Stratton than Titmouse—which will make it necessary for the fellow to set forth his pedigree with the greatest minuteness. You will then have a Commission go down to the very spot where all the witnesses are, and those fellows, the proctors, you know, are as keen as beagles"—

" Oh, Sir Charles, Sir Charles ! I—I see it all ! Oh, admirable"—

" O, pho !—there's nothing so admirable in the idea"—continued Sir Charles, with much animation. " But observe—their case will be, as it were, laid on the rack, when the process of the ecclesiastical court is applied to it. You have an examiner on the spot—all secret and mysterious—proctors ferreting out all sorts of old registers and musty documents, that we common-lawyers should never think of. 'Tis quite in their line of business—births, deaths, and marriages, and everything connected with them. By Jove ! if there be a flaw, you'll discover it in this way ! "

" Oh, Sir Charles ! "—cried Mr Runnington, with grateful glee, " your

hint is worth thousands upon thousands of pounds" —

"If it only produce *Ten Thousand a-Year* — ah, hah!" interrupted Sir Charles, laughing good-naturedly; and soon afterwards Mr Runnington quitted his chambers, charmed and excited by the masterly suggestion which had been made to him, and resolved to go off to his proctor *instanter*; set about acting upon the hint forthwith; and get a kind of general notion of the process which he contemplated commencing. You might, within an hour's time, have seen Mr Runnington closeted with the proctor always employed by his firm, Mr OBADIAH POUNCE, a man whose look told you that he was made for penetrating into and poking about anything musty, or obscure. He was, indeed, thoroughly master of his business—in fact, not an abler or more experienced proctor was to be found in Doctor's Commons. As Mr Pounce was not entirely unacquainted with the facts—having drawn up the Case submitted to Dr FLARE for his opinion as to the admissibility to probate of Mr Parkinson's draft of Lady Stratton's intended will—it did not take long to put him in possession of the wishes and intentions of Mr Runnington.

"Let us come away to Dr Flare at once," quoth Pounce, putting his watch into his fob—"You'll catch him at chambers just now, I know, and perhaps in good-humour; and a short consultation with him will be worth half-a-dozen written opinions."

So they set off for the chambers of Dr Flare, which were at only a few yards' distance.

Dr Flare was a great man in the ecclesiastical court; in fact, by far the most eminent practitioner there. He was thoroughly versed in ecclesiastical law, and every species of learning connected with it. He had, for the last thirty years, been concerned in every case of the least importance which had come before that solemn, quaint, and mysterious tribunal. He was possessed of great acuteness and powers of arrangement, and had wonderful industry; but his capital quality

was that of thoroughly identifying himself with his cause. Into every cause in which he was employed, he entered with all the keenness and vivacity which he could have displayed in one of vital personal consequence to himself. The moment he had possessed himself of the facts, he became sincerely and really convinced, to the end of the chapter, that he was on the right side—that the legal and moral merits were with his client—that he ought to win—and that his opponents were among the most execrable of mankind. But, to be sure, such a temper was his! So fierce and fiery, that it scorched everybody who came into contact with him. He was like an angry dog; who, if he have nothing else to snap at, will snap at his own tail—and Dr Flare, when he had no one else to get into a passion with, would get into one with himself. His own quickness of perception, was calculated to render him impatient and irritable, under even the clearest and briefest statement which could be addressed to him. He was, in a manner, the victim of his own *acumen nimium*. In spite, however, of considerable impetuosity of temper, he was a kind, honourable, and high-minded man; and when not in actual conflict, lived on good terms with his grave and learned brethren. In person, he was short and spare; his slight grey whiskers looked as if they had been calcined by his cheeks, which, though thin, were of a florid red colour; his forehead was ample; and there was an expression about his piercing grey eyes which seemed to ask, with a curse, of any one entering, "why d'ye interrupt me?"

When Mr Pounce and Mr Runnington entered his room, the tables, sofa, and almost every chair, being covered with papers and open books, the Doctor was settling, *in furore*, Articles extending over several hundred folios, against an unhappy curate, flourishing on forty pounds a-year in Rutlandshire, "*touching and concerning his soul's health, and the lawful correction and reformation of his manners and excesses*,"—such was the solemn and

affectionate strain in which the reverend delinquent was addressed, for having refused to baptise a child by the name of "JUDAS ISCARIOT"—that being the name required to be given by the clergyman, to the infant, by a blasphemous little Radical cobbler, a chattering infidel, who sought, by that means, to evince his insane hatred of the Christian religion. Now, Dr Flare was himself an ardent friend of the church, and a sincere Christian ; but, by virtue of the quality to which I have before alluded, he had brought himself to look upon this poor half-starved but exemplary clergyman, as guilty of a flagrant piece of wickedness ; and was forging, *con amore*, the bolt to be presently levelled at so enormous an offender. But a few minutes before their arrival, moreover, an incident had occurred to the Doctor, which had roused him into a kind of frenzy : he had been interrupted by an applicant to be sworn to some matter or other, for which the Doctor was entitled to the usual fee of one shilling. The deponent had only half-a-crown ; so the Doctor had to take out his purse, and give him the difference, with a muttered curse : and you may guess the scene which ensued, on the deponent's presently returning, and requesting that the sixpence which the Doctor had given him might be changed, being a bad one !

Mr Runnington was prepared to go fully into his case before Doctor Flare ; but on catching sight of him, he looked so startling a contrast to the calm and affable Sir Charles Wolstenholme —so like a hyena squatting in his den—that his heart suddenly failed him ; and after observing, that, instead of interrupting the Doctor at that time, he would immediately lay a written case before him, he and Mr Pounce made their escape into the open air ; the former looking so relieved of apprehension that Mr Pounce burst into a fit of laughter. But it occurred to Mr Runnington, that, in the present stage of the business, Mr Pounce was just as satisfactory an adviser as Dr Flare could be—and he determined

upon being guided by Mr Pounce, whom he instructed to retain Dr Flare immediately ; and then talked over the whole case in all its bearings—the result being, that Mr Pounce entirely corroborated the view taken by Sir Charles Wolstenholme, and pointed out so clearly and forcibly the peculiar advantages attending the contemplated mode of procedure, that Mr Runnington nearly made up his mind on the spot, to venture on the experiment ; but at all events undertook to give his final decision within twenty-four hours' time. The next morning, however, he received information from Mr Pounce which was calculated to quicken his motions —viz. that Mr Titmouse was moving, and had just "*warned the caveat*,"* with a view to discovering who his opponent was, and what was the ground of his opposition. Now, this chanced to occur on the very day of Lord De la Zouch's arrival in London ; his servant calling at Mr Runnington's office with a note requesting his attendance in Dover Street, within a few hours of Mr Runnington's receiving intelligence of the movement of Mr Titmouse.

The result of a lengthened discussion between Mr Runnington and Lord De la Zouch was, that his lordship acquiesced in the expediency of the course suggested to him, namely, to suspend for a month or two carrying into effect the scheme which he had formed for extricating Mr Aubrey from all his liabilities ; since the contemplated proceedings in the ecclesiastical court, might possibly render unnecessary the large pecuniary sacrifice contemplated by his lordship, by disentitling Mr Titmouse to receive any part of the demand which he was at present enforcing against Mr Aubrey. His lordship then gave a *carte blanche* to Mr Runnington ; and authorised him forthwith to commence, and vigorously prosecute every measure which might be necessary ; to spare no expense or exertion—to give and take no quarter ; for Lord De la Zouch

i.e. The proctors' setting forth of their client's name and interest.

expressed the warmest indignation at the whole conduct of Mr Gammon—particularly his presumptuous advances towards Miss Aubrey, and the audacious measure to which he had resorted, for the purpose of securing her favour. His lordship also felt, in common with Sir Charles Wolstenholme and Mr Runnington, that Mr Gammon's avowal to Miss Aubrey of his absolute control over the enjoyment of the Yatton property, warranted the suspicion that the decisive steps about to be taken would lead to the most important results. Thus fortified, Mr Runnington immediately gave instructions to Mr Pounce to proceed: and that person at once entered formally into battle with his brother proctor, Mr Quod, who was acting for Mr Titmouse. Supposing it to be a simple straightforward affair on the part of Mr Titmouse, Mr Quod did not give himself any particular concern about the step taken by Mr Pounce, and with which he did not acquaint Mr Gammon, till that gentleman called to inquire in what state the proceedings were. When he discovered the ground taken by Mr Aubrey, and that it would compel Mr Titmouse to prove, over again, every link in the chain which connected him with the elder branch of the Aubrey family, he was not a little agitated, though he made a great effort to conceal it, while listening to Mr Quod's account of the process about to be commenced.

Each party, it seemed, would have to give in to the court, "*an allegation*," or statement of the pedigree he intended to establish, and which would be lodged at the registry. Each would then, in due course, obtain a copy of his opponent's allegation, in order to guide him in framing his own proof, and interrogatories. A commission would then be sent, by the court, into the county where the witnesses resided, to examine them—the examiner being an officer of the court, a proctor—and, while thus engaged, representing the court. This officer, having been furnished by the parties with a copy of the two allegations, the names of the witnesses, and

the interrogatories, would proceed to examine the witnesses; but in a manner totally different from any adopted by the courts of law—viz. one by one, alone, secretly, and in the most searching and thorough manner; and having given his or her evidence, the witness would be formally threatened with the terrors of the ecclesiastical court, if he or she should presume to disclose to any person, much less the parties, the evidence which had been thus given to the examiner. When the whole of the evidence had been in this mysterious way collected by the stern inquisitor, it would be lodged in the proper office of the court; and till the arrival of the proper time for permitting both parties to take copies of it—they would be in total ignorance as to the exact nature of the evidence which had been given by even their own witnesses. Mr Quod added, that the briefs which had been used at the trial of the action of ejectment, would of themselves furnish almost the entire "*allegations*," and greatly facilitate and accelerate the proceedings.

"Then, do the parties, or their proctors," inquired Gammon, "go down beforehand to the spot where the commission is to be held?"

"Oh yes, both parties, of course—Pounce and I shall be both at work down there, rummaging registries, records, churchyards—brushing up every man, woman, and child, that's got a word to say on the subject—warm work, warm work, Mr Gammon! We sha'n't leave a stone unturned on either side! Lord, I recollect a case, for instance, where a marriage passed muster in all your common-law courts, one after the other; but as soon as it got into our hands—aha!—we found out that it was no marriage at all! and some thirty or forty thousand a-year changed owners! What d'ye think of that?" said Mr Quod, rubbing his hands, with a pleased and confident air, strangely contrasting with the reserved and disconcerted manner of his companion; who, in fact, had been suddenly thrown into a cold perspiration by what he had last heard. "Pounce," continued Quod, "is a

keen hand, but I know one that's not afraid of him any day! But I'm sorry they've secured Dr Flare, I own"—

"Ah, well, that can't be helped now, you know. Good-day, Mr Quod," said Gammon with a sickly smile. "I shall be with you about this time to-morrow, to make arrangements." And with this he withdrew.

"Curse Lady Stratton—her will—her policy — everything connected with the old creature!" said Gammon to himself vehemently, as he sat that evening alone, in his chamber, meditating upon the unexpected turn which things had taken ; "nothing but vexation, disappointment, and *danger*, by Heaven ! — attends every move I make in her accursed affairs ! Was there ever such a check, for instance, as this ? Who could have dreamed of it ? What may it net lead to ?" Here he got up hastily, and walked for some minutes to and fro. "By Heavens, it won't do !—Would to Heaven I had never ventured on the speculation of Titmouse's administering to the old woman !—What could I have been about ? And, too, when I knew nothing about the policy ! But how can I now retreat ? I *must go on* !" Another pause. "Stay—stay—that won't do either ! Oh, no!—not for a moment ! But what would they not conclude from our sudden striking ? Of course, that we dare not bring Titmouse's pedigree again into the light ; and, besides, by relinquishing the administration to Aubrey, shall I not be putting weapons into his hands—in the possession of the funds—against ourselves ! Ay, to be sure ! So, by —, here we are in for it, whether we will or not—and no escape !" The latter words he uttered aloud, at the same time snapping his fingers with a desperate air ; and continued walking about for a long time, in a state of direful perplexity and alarm.

"What shall I do ?" said he at length aloud, and then thought within himself—"Move in what direction I may, I am encountered by almost insuperable difficulties ! Yet how cautious have I not been !—If I concede the administration to Aubrey, to what motives of conscious weakness will he not refer it ? I must act—I dare not hesitate to act—on the solemn finding of a jury, now deliberately acquiesced in for so considerable a time by Aubrey. And I know that the ecclesiastical court won't easily be brought to act against that finding. It will never do to have to fight the question of distribution in the Court of Chancery."—Here he threw himself on his sofa, and remained absorbed in thought for some time. Again he rose, and paced his room with folded arms. At length another view of the matter presented itself to him. "Suppose one were to sound Aubrey, or Runnington, on the subject, and tell them that I have prevailed on Titmouse to withdraw his claim to administer—in consideration of the moral certainty there is that Lady Stratton intended they should have the whole of her property—at all events of the amount of the policy.—Bah ! that won't do ! They'd never believe us ! But who, in Heaven's name, is finding the funds for such a serious contest as this ?—Runnington has no doubt got some of Aubrey's friends to come forward and make a last experiment on his behalf. But why take *this* particular move ?" He drew a long breath, and every particle of colour fled from his cheek. "Alas ! alas ! I now see it all. Miss Aubrey has betrayed me ! She has told to her brother—to Runnington—what, in my madness, I mentioned to her ! That explains all ! Yes," he exclaimed aloud in a vehement tone, "you beautiful fiend ! It is *your* hand that has commenced the work of destruction—as you suppose !"

CHAPTER V.

LORD DE LA ZOUCH WITH THE AUBREYS, AND MR GAMMON WITH THE EARL OF DEDDLINGTON, WHOSE INTELLECT MELTS AWAY BEFORE HIM.

NEITHER Lord De la Zouch nor Mr Runnington saw any necessity for hesitating to apprise Mr Aubrey of the steps the former meditated taking on his behalf, as soon as his lordship had arrived at a decision : when, indeed, Mr Aubrey's sanction became necessary, in order to institute proceedings. During the course, therefore, of the day after that on which their determination had been taken, at Lord De la Zouch's desire, Mr Runnington undertook to make the important communication to Mr Aubrey. For a while he seemed to stagger under the weight of such a communication, and it was some time before he recovered calmness sufficient to appreciate the nature and consequences of the meditated step—viz. a direct, immediate, and potent effort to repossess him of the estates from which he had been some two years before displaced. But all other considerations were speedily absorbed in one which profoundly affected him—the princely conduct of his friend Lord De la Zouch. Mr Aubrey said scarce anything upon this topic for some time ; but Mr Runnington perceived how powerfully his feelings were excited. And will it occasion surprise when I say, that this feeling of gratitude towards the Creature—towards the noble Instrument—was presently itself merged in another, that of gratitude towards God, whose mysterious and beneficent purpose concerning him, he contemplated with a holy awe ?

Mr Runnington was himself greatly moved ; but desirous of relieving the increasing excitement under which he

perceived Mr Aubrey labouring, kindly turned the conversation towards the practical details, and apprised him of the consultation which he had had with Sir Charles Wolstenholme ; to all of which Mr Aubrey listened with intense interest, and thoroughly appreciated the value of that eminent person's admirable suggestion. But Lord De la Zouch had, with delicate consideration, peremptorily enjoined Mr Runnington not to acquaint Mr Aubrey with the circumstance, either of his lordship's having come from France solely on his affairs, or of the project which had brought him over—namely, that of summarily releasing Mr Aubrey from all his embarrassments. As soon as Mr Runnington had informed Mr Aubrey that he would find his lordship then at Dover Street, and in readiness to receive him, that closed their interview ; and Mr Aubrey, in a state of extraordinary exhilaration of spirits, instantly set off to see his munificent benefactor, and pour out before him the homage of an oppressed and grateful heart.

After a long interview, the character of which the reader may easily imagine, Lord De la Zouch insisted on setting out for Vivian Street—for he declared he could not let another hour pass without seeing those in whose welfare he felt so tender an interest : so arm-in-arm they walked thither ; and it would have made any one's heart thrill with satisfaction, to see the brightened countenance of poor Aubrey, as he walked along, full of joyful excitement, which was visible even in the elasticity and vigour

of his step. It seemed as though a millstone had been taken from his neck ; for though he was, indeed, of a somewhat sanguine temperament, yet had he not, in what had happened, solid ground for the strongest and brightest hopes ? Whether he was right, or whether he was wrong, he entertained a confidence that it was God's good providence to which he was indebted for what had happened—and that He would bring it to a successful issue. They agreed together, as they neared Vivian Street, to be guided by circumstances, in communicating or withholding information of the glorious interference in their favour, which was at that moment in active operation. Mr Aubrey's knock, so vastly sharper and more energetic than was his wont, brought two fair creatures to the window in a trice, their faces pale with apprehension ; but who shall tell the delicious agitation they experienced on seeing Lord De la Zouch, and Mr Aubrey ? 'Twas in truth an affecting interview ! Here was their princely deliverer—the very soul of delicacy and generosity—for as such, indeed, they regarded him in respect of what he had already done, though as yet ignorant of his meditated noble act of munificence !

His lordship's quick and affectionate eye detected, with much pain, on first seeing them, the ravages of that cankered anxiety which had been so long their lot. How much thinner were all of them, and was more especially Mr Aubrey, than when he had last seen them ! And the mourning which they wore for Lady Stratton, made the delicate figures of Mrs Aubrey and Kate, appear slighter than even they really were. Their countenances, also, bore the traces of sorrow and suffering—but the *expression* was, if possible, lovelier than ever. The fire and spirit of Kate's blue eyes was subdued into an exquisite expression of serenity and pensiveness ; but on the present occasion her bosom was agitated by so many conflicting feelings—her very sense of embarrassment being a delicious one—as gave a surprising vivacity of expression to her

features. Lord De la Zouch's heart melted within him, as he looked at them, and reflected on the sufferings through which they had passed, and felt a delighted consciousness of the pleasure which his appearance occasioned that virtuous but long oppressed and harassed family, and in the scene of their graceful and honourable poverty. Devout and earnest were his wish and his hope, that Providence would be pleased to crown with success his interference in their behalf. He would not be denied on one matter, upon which he declared that he had made up his mind—that they should all return with him to dinner in Dover Street ;—and, to be sure, the sight of his carriage, which he had ordered to follow him within an hour's time, gave them to understand that he really was in earnest—and so they both hastened up to dress, oh, with what bounding hearts, and elastic steps !—Lord De la Zouch felt, as they all sat together in his carriage, as though he were a fond father restored to the presence of long afflicted children ; and his courtesy was touched with an exquisite tenderness. When they entered the spacious and lofty drawing-rooms, which, though then wearing the deserted appearance incident to the season, reminded them of many former hours of splendid enjoyment, they felt a flutter of spirits, which it required no little effort to overcome. The drawing and dining-rooms struck them as quite prodigious, from their contrast to the little apartments to which they had been latterly accustomed in Vivian Street ; and several other little circumstances revived recollections and associations of a painfully interesting nature : but as their spirits grew more exhilarated, they felt a sense of real enjoyment to which all of them had long been strangers. One or two sly allusions made by his lordship to the probable future occupants of the house, and the more modern air they might choose, perhaps, to give it, suddenly brought as bright a bloom into Kate's cheek, as ever had mantled there ! When they had returned home, it was impossible to

think of *bed*—all of them had so much to say, and were in so joyous an excitement; and before they had parted for the night, Aubrey, unable any longer to keep to himself the true source of his enjoyment, electrified them by a frank and full disclosure of the great event of the day!

A day or two afterwards, Lord De la Zouch, having accomplished his benevolent purposes, returned to the Continent, having pledged Mr Aubrey to communicate with him frequently, and particularly with reference to the progress of the important proceedings which he had caused to be set on foot. The splendid chance which now existed, of retrieving his former position, was not allowed by Mr Aubrey to interfere with close attention to his professional studies, to which he might yet have to look for the only source of future subsistence; and he continued his attendance at Mr Mansfield's chambers, with exemplary punctuality and energy. It was not long after Lord De la Zouch's second departure from England, that the melancholy events occurred which have just been narrated—I mean the serious illness of Lord Dredlington, and the untimely death of Lady Cecilia. The Aubreys had no other intimation of those occurrences than such as they derived from the public papers—from which it appeared that his lordship's illness had occasioned the fright which had ended in so sad a catastrophe with Lady Cecilia; and that that illness had originated in agitation and distress, occasioned by the failure of extensive mercantile speculations, into which he had allowed himself to be betrayed by designing persons. In passing down Park Lane, one day, Mr and Mrs Aubrey, and Kate, saw a hatchment suspended from the house of Mr Titmouse; and, some short time afterwards, they saw that bereaved gentleman himself, in the park, driving a beautiful dark-blue cab, his tiger and he both in mourning—which became them equally. Black greatly alters most people's appearance; but it effected a peculiar change in Mr Titmouse; the fact

being, however, that, desirous of exhibiting even extra marks of respect for the memory of the dear deceased Lady Cecilia, he had put his sandy moustaches and imperial into mourning, by carefully dressing them with Indian ink; which gave a touching and pensive character to his expressive features.

While Mr Pounce and Mr Quod, after their own quaint fashion, are doing decisive battle with each other in a remote corner of the field of action; and while—to change the figure—Mr Titmouse's pedigree is being subjected to the gloomy, silent, and mysterious inquisition of the ecclesiastical court, let us turn for a moment to contemplate a pitiable figure, a victim of the infernal machinations of Mr Gammon—I mean the poor old Earl of Dredlington. He was yet, a month after the death of his unhappy daughter, staggering under the awful shock which he had experienced. Before he had been in any degree restored to consciousness, she had been buried for nearly three weeks; and the earliest notification to him of the melancholy occurrence, was the deep mourning habiliments of Miss Macspleuchan, who scarcely ever quitted his bedside. When, in a feeble and tremulous voice, he inquired as to the cause of his daughter's death, he could get no other account of it—either from Miss Macspleuchan, his physicians, or the Duke of Tantalan—than that it had been occasioned by the shock of suddenly seeing his lordship brought home seriously ill, she being, moreover, as he was reminded, in a critical state of health. When, at length, he pressed and challenged Miss Macspleuchan upon the matter—viz. the reality of the blighting discovery of Mr Titmouse's illegitimacy—she resolutely maintained that he was labouring altogether under a delusion—indeed a double delusion; first, as to his imaginary conversation with Mr Gammon; and secondly, as to his supposed communication of it to Lady Cecilia. Her heart was smitten, however, by the steadfast look of mournful incredu-

lity with which the Earl regarded her from time to time ; and, when alone, she heavily reproached herself, with the fraud she was practising upon the desolate and broken-hearted old man. The Duke, however, seconded by the physician, was peremptory on the point, believing that otherwise the Earl's recovery was impossible ; and as his Grace invariably joined Miss Macspleuchan in treating the mere mention of the matter as but the figment of a disordered brain, the Earl was at length silenced, if not convinced. He peremptorily prohibited Mr Titmouse, nevertheless, from entering his house—much more from appearing in his presence ; and there was little difficulty in making that gentleman seem satisfied, that the sole cause of his exclusion, was his cruelty and profligacy towards the late Lady Cecilia :—whereas, he knew all the while, and with a sickening inward shudder, the real reason—of which he had been apprised by Mr Gammon. Shortly after the Earl's illness, the Duke of Tantallan had sent for Mr Titmouse to interrogate him upon the subject of his lordship's representations ; but Mr Gammon had been beforehand with the Duke, and thoroughly tutored Titmouse, dull and weak though he was, in the part he was to play, and which Mr Gammon had striven to make as easy to him as possible.

The little ape started with well-feigned astonishment, indignation, and disgust, as soon as the Duke had mentioned the matter, but said little—such had been Gammon's peremptory injunctions—and that little, only in expression of amazement—that any one could attach the slightest importance to the wanderings of a brain disturbed by illness. 'Twas certainly a ticklish matter, the Duke felt, to press too far, or to think of intrusting to third parties. His Grace naturally concluded, that what his own superior tact and acuteness had failed in eliciting, could be detected by no one else. He frequently pressed Mr Gammon, however, upon the subject; but

that gentleman maintained the same calm, confident front he had exhibited, when first questioned ; giving the same account of all he knew of Titmouse's pedigree—and clenching the matter by sending to his Grace a copy of the brief, with the short-hand writer's notes of the trial—challenging, at the same time, the most rigorous investigation into every circumstance in the case. It was natural for the Duke, under these circumstances, to yield at length, and feel satisfied that the whole affair rested on no other basis than the distempered brain of his suffering kinsman.

Nothing shook his Grace more, than the sight of Titmouse ; for he looked, verily, one whom it was exceedingly difficult to suppose possessed of one drop of the super-sublimated ichor, which, as I have said, ran in the hallowed veins of the Dreddlingtons !—Miss Macspleuchan, a woman of superior acuteness, was infinitely more difficult to satisfy upon the subject than the Duke ; and though she said little, her manner showed that she was satisfied of the existence of some dreadful mystery or other, connected with Mr Titmouse, of which Mr Gammon was master—and the premature discovery of which had produced the deplorable effects upon the Earl, under which he was at that moment suffering. The Earl, when alone with her, and unconscious of her presence, talked to himself constantly in the same strain ; and when conversing with her, in his intervals of consciousness, repeated over and over again, without the slightest variation, facts which seemed as it were to have been burnt in upon his brain. This good lady had—to conceal nothing from the reader—begun to cherish warm feelings of attachment to Mr Gammon ; whose striking person, fascinating conversation, and flattering attention to herself—a thing quite unusual on the part of any of the Earl's visitors—were well calculated to conduce to such a result. But from the moment of Lord Dredlington's having made the statement

which had been attended by such dreadful consequences, her feelings towards Mr Gammon had been completely chilled, and alienated. Her demeanour, on the few occasions of their meeting, was constrained and distant ; her countenance clouded with suspicion, her manners were frozen with reserve and hauteur.

Mr Gammon's first interview with the Earl, after his illness and bereavement, had become a matter of absolute necessity—and was at his lordship's instance ; his wishes being conveyed through the Duke of Tantallan, who had intimated to him that it was indeed indispensable, if only to settle some business affairs of pressing exigency, connected with the failure of the Artificial Rain Company. The Duke was with his noble kinsman at the time of Mr Gammon's calling—having determined, for many reasons, to be present at the interview. They awaited his arrival in the Earl's library. It is difficult to describe the feelings with which Mr Gammon anticipated and prepared for the appointed meeting with the man on whom he had inflicted such frightful evil, towards whom he felt that he had acted the part of a fiend. How had he dealt with the absolute and unrestrained confidence which the Earl had reposed in him ! The main prop and pillar of the Earl's existence—family pride—Gammon had snapped asunder beneath him ; and as for fortune—Gammon knew that the Earl was absolutely ruined. Not, however, that Gammon felt the faintest twinge of commiseration for his noble victim : his anxiety was only as to how he should extricate himself from liability in respect of it. Had not a man of even his marble heart cause, however, for apprehension, in approaching the Earl on that occasion, to be interrogated concerning Titmouse ; to look the Earl in the face, and deny what had passed between them ; and that, too, while that rigid investigation was pending which might, within a few short weeks, convict and expose him to the scorn—the indignation—of society, as a monster of fraud, and falsehood ?

The Earl sat in his library, dressed in deep black, which hung upon his shrunk attenuated figure, as upon an old skeleton. He looked twenty years older than he had appeared two short months before. His hair, white as snow, his pallid emaciated cheek, his sunken, weak, and wandering eye, and a slight tremulous motion about his head and shoulders—all showed the mere wreck of a man that he had become, and would have shocked and subdued the feelings of any beholder. What a contrast he presented to the portly and commanding figure of the Duke of Tantallan, who sat beside him, with a brow clouded by anxiety and apprehension ! At length—"Mr Gammon, my lord," said the servant in a low tone, after gently opening the door.

"Show him in," said the Duke rather nervously, adding to the Earl in a hurried whisper,—"now be calm—my dear Dredlington—be calm—it will be over in a few minutes' time."—The Earl's lips quivered a little, his thin white hands trembled, and his eyes were directed towards the door with a look of mournful apprehension, as the fiend entered. Mr Gammon was pale, and evidently nervous and excited ; his habitual self-command, however, would have concealed it from any but a practised observer. What a glance was that with which he first saw the Earl !—"It gives me deep pain, my lord," said he in a low tone, slowly advancing, with a masterly appearance of deference and sympathy, "to perceive that you have been so great a sufferer."

"Will you take a chair, sir ?" said the Duke, pointing to one which the servant had brought for him, and in which Gammon sat down, with a courteous inclination towards the Duke ; and observing that Lord Dredlington's face had become suddenly flushed, while his lips moved as if he were speaking, "You see," added his Grace, "that my Lord Dredlington is but slowly recovering!"—Gammon sighed, and gazed at the Earl with an expression of infinite concern.

"Is it true, sir ?" inquired the

Earl, after a moment's interval of silence—evidently with a desperate effort.

Gammon felt both his companions eyeing him intently, as he answered calmly—"Alas!—your lordship of course alludes to that unhappy Company"—

"*Is it true, sir?*" repeated the Earl, altogether disregarding Gammon's attempt at evasion.

"You cannot but be aware, Mr Gammon, of the subject to which my Lord Dredlington is alluding"—said the Duke sternly, in a low tone.

"Oh!" exclaimed Gammon with a slight shrug of his shoulders and a sigh—"I understand your lordship to be referring to some conversation which you suppose to have passed between your lordship and me, concerning Mr Titmouse!"

"Sir—sir—yes! yes!" gasped the Earl, gazing at him intently.

"Well, my lord, I have heard with inexpressible astonishment, that you suppose I told your lordship he was *illegitimate!*"

"Ay!" said the Earl, with tremulous eagerness.

"Be calm, my dear Dredlington," whispered the Duke.

"Oh, my lord, you are really labouring under as complete a delusion as ever man"—commenced Gammon with a melancholy smile.

"Sir—Mr Gammon—do you believe that there is no God?—that He does not know the—the?"—interrupted the Earl, but ceased, apparently overpowered by his emotions. Gammon looked in appealing silence at the Duke, who eyed him with haughty scrutiny.

"What makes you imagine, sir, that I am bereft of reason and memory?" presently inquired the Earl, with a strength of voice and manner which alarmed Gammon.

"I cannot account, my lord, for the extraordinary hallucination which seems"—

"And I suppose, sir, I am equally dreaming about the rent-charge for two thousand a-year, which you have got on the Yatton pro"—

"Oh, pardon—pardon me, my lord! All pure—absolute delusion and fiction!" interrupted Gammon, with a confident smile,—a look, and a tone of voice, which would have staggered the most incredulous.

The Earl raised his thin, white, trembling hand, and pressed it against his forehead for a moment; and then said, turning to the Duke—"This gentleman would deny that he is now in our presence!"

"My dear Dredlington—don't, for God's sake, excite yourself," said the Duke anxiously; adding, after a pause, "I am as persuaded as I am of my existence, that you're under a complete delusion! Recollect your serious illness—every one is subject to this sort of thing, when he's been so ill as you have!"

"Oh, Tant Allan! Tant Allan!" replied the Earl, mournfully shaking his head—"I take God to witness how this man is lying!" The Duke glanced hastily at Gammon as these words were uttered, and observed that he had gone suddenly pale, and was in the act of rising from his chair.

"Pray, Mr Gammon"—commenced the Duke imploringly.

"I can make great allowance, I assure your Grace, for his lordship's situation—but there are bounds which I will permit no man living, under any circumstances, to overstep with impunity," said Gammon, calmly but resolutely—overjoyed at obtaining such a pretext for abruptly terminating the embarrassing interview—"and unless his lordship choose instantly to retract what he has said, and apologise for it, I will never enter his presence again!"

"Oh—he had better go!" said the Earl, feebly addressing the Duke, evidently averting his face from Gammon with disgust and horror.

"Mr Gammon, pray resume your seat," said the Duke significantly—"You are bound to regard the words as not having been spoken."

"I thank your Grace," replied Gammon determinedly—"but I require an explicit retraction. I entertain a deep deference towards your Grace,

but am also aware of what is due to myself. My lord," he added, as if at a sudden impulse, addressing the Earl, "do permit me to request your lordship to withdraw and apologise for"—But the Earl turned his face aside; and extending his white hand towards Gammon, feebly motioned him away; on which, with a low bow to the Duke of Tantallan, Gammon took his hat, and moved towards the door.

"Sir—Mr Gammon—you must not go," said the Duke in an earnest and commanding manner—"you are here on business, of pressing importance—all this must pass away and be forgotten."

"Your Grace I shall be most happy to attend at any time, and any where; but this room I quit instantly."

"Then, sir, have the goodness to walk into the next," said the Duke somewhat imperiously, "and I will come to you presently." Mr Gammon bowed and withdrew.

"Oh God! how atrocious is the conduct of that man!" said the Earl, when they were left alone.

"Really, Dredlington, you must get rid of these—these—absurd notions."

"Let me never see his face again!" replied the Earl feebly. "I have but a short time to live, and that time, the sight of him, I feel, makes still shorter!" The Duke looked both vexed and embarrassed.

"Come—come—now he's here," continued his Grace, "and on so important an errand—let us close with the fellow—let us have him back, and I'll tell him you withdraw"—

"Withdraw? He *is* withdrawn," said the Earl confusedly.

"What d'ye mean, my dear Dredlington? I say—let me tell him"—

"I mean, it was at his chambers, in Holborn—I pledge my honour, I recollect as if it were yester"—

"Pho, pho!" cried the Duke rather impatiently—"it must be done! He's come on matters of the last importance—the thing's been put off to the latest moment on your account—that cursed Company!" The Earl looked up at his companion, and a faint smile flitted over his wasted features.

"Ah—I'm now satisfied," said he, shaking his head—"that they must dig a great depth, indeed, before they come to the copper!" The Duke looked puzzled, but replied hastily, "That's right!—I'll have him back, and you'll allow me to say it's all a mistake?"

"Certainly—I am satisfied of it."

"That will do, my dear Dredlington!—That's the way such nonsense should be put an end to," said the Duke; and, ringing the bell, ordered the servant to request Mr Gammon to return. After a brief interval, that gentleman re-entered the library, but with some sternness and reluctance of manner.

"Mr Gammon," said the Duke, a little quickly, "my Lord Dredlington owns he was mistaken—he, of course, withdraws the expression—so we had better at once to business"—

"Ay—certainly!—certainly! Have you the papers with you, Mr Gammon?" inquired the Earl, while his trembling fingers held his gold spectacles in readiness to put them on. Mr Gammon bowed rather haughtily, and resuming the chair he had quitted, drew it to the table, and opened a little packet.

"It was a ridiculous affair, I am afraid, sir," said the Earl, addressing Mr Gammon, who felt a little surprised at the altered look and tone of the Earl.

"I fear it was extremely unfortunate, my lord, in its issue," he replied gravely, arranging his papers.

"The thing did not look so absurd at first, Tantallan, I assure you!" said the Earl, addressing the Duke, who was eyeing Mr Gammon's movements with much anxiety; for he had come prepared to state the final result of long negotiations between the creditors, and the directors and shareholders, of the "Artificial Rain Company."

"These things never do—at first," his Grace replied, with a sort of sigh.

"Just show us, Mr Gammon," said the Earl, "if you please, the diagrams and the sections of the strata"—

"The what?" inquired the Duke,

turning surprisedly to the Earl—so did Mr Gammon, and for a moment ceased arranging his papers. Both the Duke and he turned pale, and gazed in silent dismay at their companion. Gammon felt momentarily sick at heart. It was evident that Lord Dreddlington's mind had gently given way!—

There was a smile of indescribable weakness flickering about the mouth; the eyes were unsteady; all sternness had vanished from his brow; and his manner was relaxed—perfectly calm, with even an approach towards cheerfulness. Gammon's face was suddenly blanched, and he glanced with horror at the Duke, who, without removing his eyes from Lord Dreddlington, unconsciously exclaimed, "Oh my God!"

"Is it your lordship's pleasure," faltered Gammon, his hands trembling visibly.

"You are right, Tantallan," said Lord Dreddlington, as if suddenly struck by the peculiar look with which the Duke continued to regard him. "You shall hear all; but we must be alone. Sir, you may retire, and be in attendance another day," he added, abruptly addressing Gammon, with all his former stateliness of manner, but with a feeble voice. Mr Gammon, greatly agitated, hastily put together the documents which he had partially arranged on the table, and with a hurried bow withdrew.

"At nine this evening—in Portman Square, sir, if you please," said the Duke tremulously.

"I will attend your Grace," said Gammon, and with not a little trepidation closed the door after him; on which the Earl proceeded, in an anxious and mysterious manner, to intimate the existence of a conspiracy on the part of the Earl of Fitzwalter and others, to prevent his—Lord Dreddlington's—obtaining a marquise, on the ground that he had been connected with Sir Sharper Bubble in a swindling company; and his lordship had good grounds for believing that Mr Gammon was secretly lending his assistance to the undertaking;

and that his coming there that morning, with the papers relating to the intended purchase of the Isle of Dogs, was in furtherance of his treacherous objects! The Duke listened in silent dismay to this rambling account of the imaginary conspiracy, and had just determined upon quietly sending for Miss Macspleuchan, when the Earl abruptly paused, and after a confused stare at his companion, pressed his hand to his forehead, and said with hesitation and embarrassment—"Pray, Tantallan, don't think anything more about what I have been saying! I—I—feel that I have been talking nonsense—incoherently—Surely it must have struck you so? Eh, Tantallan?"

There was something so imbecile and miserable in the look with which the Duke regarded his companion, that the Duke for a moment could not reply to him. At length, "my dear Dreddlington," said he, gently grasping his hand, "you are at present, only a little excited—you will soon recover yourself. Let us ask Miss Macspleuchan to join us, as she is sitting all alone up-stairs."

"Not just now, Tantallan—I feel I have wandered a little, but all is now right again. He is gone, is he?" The Duke nodded. "The sight of that man was at first too much for me; I felt oppressed and confused, but I thought it right to struggle against it!—He denied it all?—Is not that enough to drive a man out of his senses?"

"My dear Dreddlington, we shall get wrong again—let us quit the subject," said the Duke anxiously.

"No," replied the Earl languidly, "do not fear me; I feel quite myself again! I can only repeat to you, that that man's conversation with me about—about—he shuddered—"as certainly happened, as the Heavens are above us!" The Earl had really, at all events for the present, recovered from the temporary confusion into which his thoughts had fallen; and proceeded, with as much energy as his shattered condition would admit of, to give the Duke, as he had often done before, a distinct and consist-

ent account of all that had taken place at Mr Gammon's chambers :—and as he went on, it all of a sudden occurred to his Grace, for the first time—how improbable is it that Lord Dredlington should have invented a scene, which he has uniformly delineated in almost the same words? What but truth and reality could enable him to preserve such a consistency in describing a transaction with such minute circumstantiality? Having once looked at the matter in this new light, every succeeding moment saw him more and more satisfied that this was the true view of it; and before he had quitted his unfortunate kinsman, he had pretty nearly convinced himself of three things; first, that Mr Titmouse was a hideous, little, base-born miscreant and imposter; secondly, that Mr Gammon must be the profoundest scoundrel living;

and lastly, that it was marvellous that he—the Duke—had been so long in arriving at such a conclusion. But then, it subsequently occurred to the sagacious Duke—how was he to act? What position was he to assume with Mr Gammon, when he came in the evening, in obedience to his Grace's own appointment? What reasons could he assign for his sudden change of opinion? Nothing new had occurred; and he felt a little embarrassed, seeing that all he should be able to say, would be, that he had at length suddenly taken a different view of facts long well known! At all events, he determined to put the brief of Mr Titmouse's case used at the trials, and which Mr Gammon had some time before forwarded to his Grace's house into the hands of some eminent lawyer, for a candid and confidential opinion.

CHAPTER VI.

MR GAMMON GETTING INTO DEEP WATERS, AND DRAGGING HIS GREAT FRIENDS AFTER HIM.

MR GAMMON, on quitting Lord Dredlington's house, quickly recovered from the momentary shock which he had suffered in the Earl's presence; and—shall I record the fact?—all other feelings, and all his fears, were merged in one of delight and exultation at the awful calamity which had befallen Lord Dredlington. No one, Mr Gammon considered, would thenceforth think of attaching the least importance to anything the Earl might say, or had said, but would doubtless deem it the mere creation of a disordered brain. Then all that would be necessary, would be the silencing Titmouse—no difficult matter, since even he could comprehend that secrecy was to him a matter of

salvation or destruction! But then, again, like a criminal's chance glance at the hideous gallows in the distance—a recollection of the ecclesiastical inquiry, at that instant in vigorous action, blanched the cheek of Mr Gammon, and dashed all his new hopes to the ground. If those infernal inquisitors *should* discover all, and thereby demonstrate Titmouse's illegitimacy, how appalling would be the position of Mr Gammon! What would then avail him the insanity of Lord Dredlington? Would it not, on the contrary, be then attributed to the right cause—the atrocious cruelty and villainy which had been practised upon him? How irretrievably was Gammon committed, by his repeated

and solemn asseverations to Miss Macspleuchan, and the Earl of Dredlington! The evidence which sufficed to entitle Mr Aubrey, in preference to Mr Titmouse, to administer to Lady Stratton, would also suffice to entitle him to an immediate restoration to the Yatton property! And would the matter rest there? Would no steps be taken, in such an event, to fix him—Gammon—as a partner, or a prime mover, in the fraud and conspiracy by which alone, it would then be alleged, Titmouse had been enabled to recover the property? Absorbed by these pleasant contemplations, he was so lost to all around him, that he was within an ace of being crushed to death under the wheels of an enormous heavily-laden waggon, which he had not seen approaching, as he crossed the street. It might, perhaps, have been well had it been so. The accident would certainly have saved him from a "*sea of troubles*," on which, for aught we can at present see, he may be tossed for the remainder of his life.

The chief object of Mr Gammon's interview with the Earl of Dredlington, had been to communicate to his lordship information concerning the alarming position in which he stood with reference to the defunct Artificial Rain Company. The prominent and active part which his lordship had been seduced into taking, in the patronage and management of that Company, had naturally marked him out as the fittest object of attack to the creditors. The Company had no Act of Parliament, nor charter, nor deed of settlement; it was simply a huge unwieldy *partnership*, consisting of all such persons as could be shown to be interested, or to have held themselves out to the world as interested in it: and consequently, whether individually known or not, liable to the public who had dealt with the Company, and given credit to it; on the obvious principle of equity, that all who would seek to share the profits of a speculation, must be responsible for its liabilities. In the present instance, had it not been for the circumstance of there being a considerable number of weak, inex-

perienced, but responsible adventurers, who, by entering into the affair, had become liable to share Lord Dredlington's burden of responsibility, his lordship must have been totally ruined to all intents and purposes. As soon as Sir Sharper Bubble's absconding had opened the eyes of the public, and of the shareholders, it became necessary to take instant measures for ascertaining the exact state of affairs—and the liabilities which had been contracted. Heavens! what a frightful array of creditors now made their appearance against the Artificial Rain Company! It was inconceivable how so many, and to so immense an amount, could have arisen during the short period of the Company's being in existence; but the fact is, that there are always thousands of persons who, as soon as they see individuals of undoubted responsibility fairly committed to a speculation of this sort, will give almost unlimited credit, and supply anything which may be ordered on behalf, or for the purposes, of the Company.

It had originated in a supposed grand discovery of our philosophical friend, Doctor Diabolus Gander, that there were certain modes of operating upon the atmosphere, by means of electrical agency, which would insure an abundant supply of rain in seasons of the greatest drought. Now, first and foremost among the creditors of the Company, was that famous philosopher himself; who, to constitute himself effectually a creditor, had cunningly declined to take any shares in the concern! — He now claimed £1700 for a series of "preliminary experiments," independently of compensation for his time and services in conducting the aforesaid experiments; — and, in order to put the question of liability beyond all doubt, the Doctor had taken care, from time to time, to invite the more distinguished and wealthy of the shareholders to come and witness his doings—always carefully noting down their names, and the names also of the witnesses who could prove such attendance—the interest they took in the experiments—

their expressed good wishes for the success of the Company, &c. &c., and their repeated acknowledgments of the uniform courtesy of the worthy Doctor, who thought no pains too great to explain the nature of his surprising operations to them—nor to impress on the minds of persons who love to be witnesses, the fact of such visits and explanations! Then, again, he had entered into an agreement, signed by Lord Dredlington, and one or two others on behalf of the Company, by which he was appointed “permanent scientific director” for a period of ten years, at a salary of £1000 a-year, over and above the sums agreed to be paid him for “collateral and supplementary services.” This latter claim, however, the Doctor generously offered to compromise, in consideration of the exhalation of the Company, on payment of four thousand pounds down!! Then came a demand amounting to little short of £25,000 for an inconceivable quantity of copper wire, which had been purchased for the purpose of being used in all the cities and towns which chose to avail themselves of the services of the Company, in the following way—viz. a complete circle of electric communication was to be obtained, by attaching wires to the summits of all the church steeples; and it was necessary that such wires should be of considerable strength and thickness, to prevent their being broken by birds flying against, and perching upon them: but Dr Gander intimated that he had nearly discovered a mode of charging the wires with the electric fluid, which would cause any bird coming into contact with them, immediately to fall down dead. Then there were fearful charges for at least nine miles’ length of leaden pipes and hose, and for steam-engines, and electrical machines, and so forth; particularly an item of eight thousand pounds for the expenses of trying the experiment in a village in the extremity of Cornwall, and which was nearly completed, when the unfortunate event occurred, which occasioned the sudden break up of the Company.

This will suffice to give the uninitiated reader a glimpse of the real nature of the liabilities incurred by those who become partners in this and similar splendid undertakings. Dr Gander got two actions commenced, the very day after the departure of Sir Sharper Bubble, against six of the principal shareholders, in respect of his “preliminary experiments,” and his agreement for ten years’ service; and writs came fluttering in from other creditors, almost daily; all which occurrences rendered it necessary to take measures for ascertaining how matters stood, if acting with a view to coming speedily to an amicable compromise. After great exertions, and attending many meetings, Mr Gammon succeeded in provisionally extricating Lord Dredlington, on his paying down, within twelve months, the sum of £18,000. The Duke of Tantallan was fixed with a liability for £8000, the Marquis of Marmalade for £6000: and the latter twopfers made the most solemn vows, sanctified by vehement private imprecations, never to have anything to do again with joint-stock companies: though it must be owned that they had been, as the phrase is, “let off easily.”

I must not, however, disguise from the reader, that the Artificial Rain Company was not the only one with which these distinguished personages, together with Lord Dredlington, had become connected. There was the Gunpowder and Fresh Water Company, of which Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, were the solicitors—but *sufficient for the day is the evil thereof*; and let it suffice for the present to say, that some short time afterwards, the Duke of Tantallan, on the part of the Earl of Dredlington, paid down the sum of £10,000 on account of the above-mentioned sum of £18,000, the remainder of which was to be called for in six months’ time. Mr Gammon, however, could not think of the possibility of the Gunpowder Company’s explosion without a shudder, on account of the dreadful extent to which Lord Dredlington

was implicated, and from which Gammon feared that there really were no means of extricating him. What would he then have given, never to have seduced the Earl into such speculations? Nay, never to have set eyes upon either the Earl of Dreddlington, or the Lady Cecilia? What advantage had he ever gained, after all, by his desperate grasp after aristocratic connection? If, nevertheless, the Earl should prove really and permanently insane, what a godsend would such an event be, in every point of view, to Gammon—silencing for ever the chief sufferer and witness—and saving Gammon from all the endless vexations and anxieties arising out of personal explanations and collisions with the man whom he had drawn into the vortex of pecuniary ruin:—shielding Gammon, in short, from a world of reproaches and execrations!

As for Mr Titmouse, the fortunate possessor of ten thousand a-year, as thousands, with a sigh of envy, regarded him,—the uninitiated, who had an opportunity of watching his public motions, gave him credit for feeling deeply the melancholy bereavement which he had sustained in the loss of his lamented Lady Cecilia; but those more intimately acquainted with his family circumstances, could not help remarking one little ingredient of pleasure in his recent cup of bitterness—viz. that as Lady Cecilia had left no offspring—no dear pledge of affection—Mr Titmouse was not only saved a vast deal of anxiety as to the bringing up of the child, but had become himself heir-apparent to the barony of Drelin-court, on the death of the Earl of Dreddlington; who, whatever might be the effect of his whispered misfortunes in his pecuniary speculations, had not the power, being merely tenant for life under the entail, of injuring the fortune annexed to the title. Though Mr Gammon loathed the sight, and thought, of Titmouse, he was yet the centre of prodigious anxiety to that gentleman, who felt that he had, at all events at present, a deep stake in upholding, to the world, Mr Titmouse's position and credit. He had been

frightened into a state of the most abject submission to all Mr Gammon's requirements—one of which was, the preservation of that external decorum, when in public, which had produced the favourable impression already adverted to. The other was—a vast contraction of his expenditure. Mr Gammon insisted upon his disposing of his house in Park Lane—for months almost destitute of furniture, which had fallen a prey to divers of his execution-creditors—but engaged for him a suit of handsome furnished apartments in Chapel Street, May Fair, allowing him the attendance of a valet, as usual; and also hiring for him a cab, tiger, groom, and a couple of saddle-horses, with which Mr Titmouse contrived to make an appearance, before so much of the world as was left in London during the autumn, suitable to his station.

Some of the more clamorous of his creditors, Mr Gammon had contrived to pacify by considerable payments on account, and a solemn assurance that every one of Mr Titmouse's debts was in train of rapid liquidation. Could his creditors, indeed—Gammon asked—fail to see and judge for themselves, what an altered man, in his person and habits, Mr Titmouse had become, since the shock he had received on the death of Lady Cecilia? Had, indeed, he felt never so disposed to re-enter the scenes of gay and expensive profligacy, in which he had revelled so madly during the first eighteen months after his extraordinary exaltation; there was a serious obstacle to his doing so, in his having neglected to pay divers heavy “debts of honour,” as they are strangely called; for which delinquencies he had twice had his nose pulled in public, and once been horsewhipped. The gates of the sporting world were thus finally closed against him, and so at least one source of profligate expenditure was shut out. Though, however, he was free to ride or drive whithersoever he chose—and that, too, as became a man of fashion, in respect of appearance and equipment—he felt but a prisoner at large, and dependent

entirely upon the will and pleasure of Mr Gammon for his very means of subsistence. Most of his evenings were spent in such of the theatres as were open, while his nights were often passed amidst scenes strange enough for a young widower to be seen in! Though he was a frequent visitor at Brookes', I must nevertheless do that decent club the justice of saying, that its members were not anxious for the presence or company of Mr Titmouse. In fact, but for the continued countenance afforded to him by Mr O'Gibbet, for reasons best known to that gentleman, my friend would have been, some time before, unceremoniously expelled from the club, where he had made, certainly, one or two exceedingly disagreeable exhibitions.

Liquor was made for fools to get drunk with, and so shorten their encumbering existence upon the earth; and as for Titmouse, I really do not think he ever went to bed completely sober; and he avowed, that "whenever he was alone, he felt so miserable;" and there was only one way, he said, which he knew of, to "drive dull care away." Though aware of it in point of fact, Titmouse had neither sense nor sensibility enough to appreciate the fearful frailty of that tenure by which he held his present advantages of station—never reflecting that he was standing on a mine that might explode at any moment—that he was liable, at any moment, to be precipitated from his elevation, into far deeper obscurity and poverty than he had ever emerged from! He had no power of enhancing his enjoyment of the present, either by vivid contrast with the past, or the possible reverses of the future. A wealthy and profligate fool is by no means the enviable person he may appear to silly lookers-on; but what must he be, when placed in the circumstances of Titmouse? He found town, at a dull season—the fall of the year, to be sure—become daily duller, the sphere of his refined enjoyments having become so miserably contracted, and Mr Gammon more and more stern and gloomy. Titmouse, in fact, always dreaded to go near him,

for he enjoined on Titmouse, whenever they met, a circumspection which was new, and intolerable. He was refused admission at Lord Dredlington's; the Duke of Tantallan's he dared not go near. When, in the park, he met the Earl's chariot, a dismal object indeed to him, driving slowly along—all in deep mourning—the place of Lady Cecilia now occupied by Miss Macspleuchan, and the shattered old white-haired man beside her, taking evidently no notice of anything about him; if Titmouse caught her eye, even he could not fail to see that it was instantly removed, as from a disgusting object. He never met that carriage without a shudder, and a violent one, at thought of the frightful fraud of which he had been at first the unconscious instrument, but to which he was now a consenting party.

He had earnestly besought Mr Gammon to allow him to spend a few months on the Continent, and provide him with funds to do so; but on due consideration, Mr Gammon refused, in the critical conjuncture of existing circumstances—at all events till he should have been furnished with some clue to the course which the pending investigation was taking. Mr Gammon, however, consented to his going to Yatton;—so thither he went, but to encounter only sullen faces; servants whose wages were in arrear; tenants whom his exactions were ruining; the friends of Mudflint and Bloodsuck indignant at his not coming forward to rescue them from impending destruction; and his constituency furious at the number of bills remaining unpaid; at his total disregard of their interests in Parliament; and his contemptible and ridiculous conduct and appearance there, which had made them the laughing-stock of the nation. As for the nobility or gentry of the neighbourhood, of course their notice of him was out of the question. From good little Doctor Tatham, even, he could get nothing more than a cold and guarded civility; in fact, Mr Titmouse was fifty times more miserable at Yatton than he had been in London; and, moreover, the old Hall had been

completely stripped of the handsome furniture that had been put into it on his coming into possession, by his voracious execution-creditors; and all he could do here, to enjoy existence, was to smoke, and drink brandy-and-water. He felt an impostor; that he had no right to be there; no claim to the respect or attention of any one. Through the noble grounds of Yatton, amidst the soft melancholy sunshine of October, he walked, frightened and alone; a falling leaf alighting on him would make him start with apprehension and almost drop his cigar.—While such was the dreary aspect of things at Yatton, what was the condition of Mr Gammon in London?

It is not possible that any one who betakes himself to tortuous modes of effecting his purposes, and of securing the objects which a keen ambition may have proposed to him, can be happy. The perpetual dread of detection and failure, causes him to lie, as it were, ever writhing upon a bed of torture. To feel one's self failing, irretrievably, in spite of deeply-laid, desperate, and dishonourable schemes for securing success, is sickening and miserable indeed. One in such circumstances feels that the bitterness of disappointment will not be mitigated or assuaged by a consciousness of the sympathy and respect of those who have witnessed the unsuccessful attempts—a thought deadening to the soul; and Gammon felt himself among the most miserable of mankind. All other anxieties were, however, at present absorbed in one—that concerning the issue of the inquiry in the ecclesiastical court, then pending; and which, as it were, darkened his spirit within him, and pressed him into the earth. If the issue of that investigation should be adverse, he had absolutely nothing for it, but instant flight from universal scorn and execration. Of what avail would then have been all his prodigious anxieties, sacrifices, and exertions, his deep-laid and complicated plans and purposes? He would have irretrievably damned himself—for what? To allow the stupid wretch

Titmouse, to revel, for a season, in unbounded luxury and profligacy! What single personal advantage had Mr Gammon hitherto obtained for himself, taxed to their utmost as had been his powerful energies for the last three years?

First of all, as to Miss Aubrey, the lovely object of his intense desires—what advance had he made towards the accomplishment of his objects after all his profound and cruel treachery against her brother? Not a hair's-breadth. Nay, on the contrary, the slight footing of intimacy which he had contrived, in the first instance, to secure, he had now lost for ever. Could they have failed to perceive, in spite of all his devices, his relentless hand in the recent persecution of Mr Aubrey? The stern deportment of Mr Runnington, who had expressly prohibited Mr Aubrey from all communication with Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, except through Mr Runnington himself—spoke volumes. Moreover, Mr Gammon had chanced to be prowling about Vivian Street on the very evening on which Lord De la Zouch made his unexpected appearance with Mr Aubrey, as already described; and Gammon had seen Mr Aubrey, Mrs Aubrey, and Miss Aubrey, followed by his lordship, enter his carriage in dinner-costume; and he thought, with a violent pang, of one Mr Delamere! He had also ascertained how suddenly his lordship had come over from Paris—just at that crisis in the circumstances of the Aubreys; and how probable was it, that his lordship's potent interference had originated the formidable proceedings of the Ecclesiastical Court! And suppose the result of them should be, to detect the imposition by means of which Titmouse had been enabled to oust Mr Aubrey from Yatton—what must she—what must they all—think of Mr Gammon, after his avowal to Miss Aubrey? Inevitably, that he had either originally contrived, or, having long since discovered, was now conniving at, the imposture! And what if she really had been, all the

while, engaged to the future Lord De la Zouch? And if the present peer, with his immense revenues, were resolved to bear Mr Aubrey through all his difficulties and troubles with a high hand, who could stand such a contest with him? Had not Gammon already felt his power in the late accursed bribery actions? And imagining his lordship to have been stimulated to set on foot the pending proceedings, by the communication of Miss Aubrey concerning Mr Gammon's own admissions to her—was his lordship likely to falter in his purposes?

Look again at the financial difficulties which were thickening around him. Between sixty and seventy thousand pounds had been already raised on mortgage of the Yatton estates!—and not a shilling more could now be obtained, without additional and collateral security, which Gammon could not procure. Then there was the interest payable half-yearly on these mortgages, which alone swallowed up some £3500 annually. In addition to this, Titmouse was over head-and-ears in debt; and he must be supported, all the while, in a manner suitable to his station; and an establishment must be kept up at Yatton. How, with all this, was Mr Gammon's own dearly-bought rent-charge to be realised? The already overburdened property was totally unequal to bear this additional pressure. Again, if his motion, which was to be made in the ensuing term for a new trial in the case of *Wigley v. Gammon*, should fail, then he was left at the mercy of the plaintiff, for a sum considerably exceeding £3000, including the heavy costs, and capable of being immediately enforced, by incarceration of his person, or seizure of his goods! Mr Gammon, moreover, had been unfortunate in some gambling speculations in the funds, by which means the money he had so quickly made, had been as quickly lost. It was true, there were the probable proceeds of the two promissory notes now put in suit against Mr Aubrey, and also the bond of Lord De la Zouch himself, in all amount-

ing to twenty thousand pounds, with interest: but months must necessarily elapse before, even in the ordinary course, the actions for the recovery of these sums could be brought to a successful issue—to say nothing of any disastrous occurrence, of which Gammon could just conceive the possibility, and which might have the effect of fatally impugning the right of action of Mr Titmouse.

Gammon had repeatedly turned in his mind the propriety of raising money by assignment of the bond of Lord De la Zouch, but for several reasons had deemed it inexpedient to venture upon such a step. For instance, the bond would be due within a month or two; and who would advance any serious sum on so large a security, without rigorous inquiries into the original validity of the instrument, and into the right of the obligee to put it in suit? Supposing the issue of the Ecclesiastical inquiry to be adverse, and Titmouse's title to the Yatton property to be annihilated, would not that at once invalidate his claims upon the bond, and also upon the two promissory notes—at all events in equity? Lastly, his hopes of political advancement, to which he clung with incredible tenacity, full blooming though they had been till the moment of his being sued for the bribery penalties, were all in danger of being blighted for ever, unless he could succeed in defeating the verdict—a result of which he entertained scarce any expectation at all. But even supposing him successful there, what was to become of him, if the issue of the pending Ecclesiastical proceedings should brand him as having abetted imposture of the most gross and glaring description—nay, as being in fact its originator? Once or twice, during his frequent agitating reviews of all these events and circumstances, he caught, as it were, a ghastly glimpse of a sort of system of RETRIBUTION in progress, and seemed able to trace evil consequences—of defeat and misery—from every single act which he had done.

Success or failure in the Ecclesias-

tical suit, was now, in fact, the pivot upon which everything turned with Mr Gammon—it would be either his salvation, or his destruction ; and the thought of it kept him in a state of feverish trepidation and excitement, from morning to night—rendering him almost wholly incapable of attending to his professional business. He had gone down several times, accompanied by Mr Quod, to ascertain, as far as practicable, the course which things were taking. Mr Quod was sanguine as to the issue ; but, alas ! Gammon had not ventured to tell him the true state of the case : so that Quod naturally confined himself to substantiating Mr Titmouse's pedigree, as it had been propounded, and with success, at the trial of the ejectment. Mr Gammon trembled at the

systematic and vigorous prosecution of the cause on the part of Mr Aubrey : what disclosures might it not elicit ? Regardless of the consequences, he had several times tried to discover from those who had been examined, the course of inquiry which had been pursued, and the evidence which had been obtained from them—but in vain : some of the witnesses were in a station of society which of itself repelled his advances ; and others effectually deterred from communicativeness, by the injunctions of the commissioner. Thus Mr Gammon could ascertain nothing—and was left to await, in fearful suspense, the legitimate issue of this tantalising and mysterious process, till the day when both parties should be put in possession of all the evidence which had been obtained.

CHAPTER VII.

WHAT MOLES IN THE ECCLESIASTICAL COURT CAN DO UNDER GROUND ; AND GAMMON IN A QUANDARY.

THE prospects of the Aubreys, brightened though they had been by the sudden interference of Lord De la Zouch at the moment of their deepest gloom, did not disturb that calm and peaceful course of life which they had maintained through all their troubles. Oh, how animated and happy, however, was now that little family !—and that, not through any overweening confidence as to the result of Lord De la Zouch's operations on their behalf, but from a pious and cheerful persuasion that they were not forsaken of Heaven, which had given this benignant token of its remembrance. The beautiful bloom began to reappear on the cheeks of both Mrs Aubrey and Kate, and the eye of Mr Aubrey was no longer laden with gloom and anxiety. He pursued the study of

the law with steadfast energy, till the period of Mr Mansfield's quitting town, and his chambers being closed till the beginning of November. The Aubreys, poor souls ! secretly pined for a glimpse, however brief, of the pleasures of the country ; and about the middle of September, they, sure enough, received a pressing invitation from Lord and Lady De la Zouch, for all of them to join them in France, by way of a total and enlivening change of scene. Mrs Aubrey and Kate had all but persuaded Mr Aubrey into an acceptance of the kind suit, when he suddenly bethought himself of what he deemed an insuperable obstacle. It will be borne in mind that Mr Aubrey had given bail to a large amount, nearly sixteen thousand pounds, in the two actions at the suit of Mr Tit-

mouse, and of Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap; and, on inquiry, two of the friends who had become surety for him were abroad, and could not be communicated with; so Mr Aubrey peremptorily refused, under such circumstances, to quit the country, though for never so brief an interval. On seriously assuring Lord De la Zouch that there existed insuperable objections to his just then leaving England, the ever-active kindness of his noble friend prompted a fresh proposal,—that they should, within a week's time, all of them, set off for a lovely residence of his lordship's in Essex, some fifteen miles from town, called Tunstall Priory—where they would find everything fully prepared for their reception, and where they were earnestly entreated to remain, till they should be joined by their host and hostess from France, about the latter end of October.

"Tis quite impossible for me to describe the exhilaration of spirits with which, the invitation having been gratefully accepted by Mr Aubrey, they all prepared for their little journey. He had made arrangements for their going down by one of the coaches, which went within a couple of miles of the Priory; but here again the thoughtful delicacy and kindness of his lordship were manifest; for the evening before they set off, one of the servants from Dover Street came to ask at what hour they would wish the carriage to call for them, and the van for their luggage—such being the orders which had come from his lordship; and further, that the carriage and servants were to remain at their command, during the whole of their stay at the Priory. Both Mrs Aubrey and Kate, in their excitement, burst into tears on hearing of this additional trait of anxious and considerate attention. Oh! it would have cheered your heart, good reader, to see the blithe faces, and bounding spirits, with which that little family set off on the ensuing morning on their expedition. Oh! how refreshing was the country air!—how enlivening and beautiful the country scenery, amid the soft sunlight of Sep-

tember!—"Twas a Paradise of a place—and as day after day glided away, they felt a sense of the enjoyment of existence, such as they had never experienced before!

Though not a pleasant transition, the order of events requires us to return to town—and to no inviting part of town, viz. Thavies' Inn. "Twas about eight o'clock in the evening, towards the close of October, and Mr Gammon was walking to and fro about his room, rendered sufficiently snug, by the light of a lamp, and the warmth of a good fire. He himself, however, was far from being cheerful—he was in a state of exquisite anxiety and suspense—and might well be; for he was in momentary expectation of receiving a copy of the evidence which had been taken on the part of Mr Aubrey, in the ecclesiastical suit. He muttered blighting curses at the intolerable delay of old Mr Quod, who, Mr Gammon felt assured, might have procured a copy of the evidence several hours before, with only moderate exertion. Twice had his messenger been despatched in vain; and he was now absent on the third errand to Mr Quod's chambers. At length Mr Gammon heard a heavy footstep ascending the stairs—he knew it, and, darting to the door, opened it just as his messenger had reached the landing with a bulky white packet under his arm, sealed, and tied with red tape.

"Ah!—that will do. Thank you, thank you!—call to-morrow morning," said Gammon hastily, almost snatching the packet out of the man's hand.

"Mrs Brown—don't let me be disturbed to-night by any one—on any earthly consideration," said he with feverish impetuosity to his laundress; and, having ordered her to close the outer door, he re-entered his sitting-room, and with a beating heart burst open the seals, tape, and cartridge-paper, and fastened in an instant with devouring eyes upon the pregnant enclosure. Over page after page he glanced with lightning speed, his breathing unconsciously accelerated, the while. When he had got to about the middle of the evidence, his breath

was for a minute suspended, while his affrighted eye travelled down a couple of pages, which told him all—all he had feared to see, and more—more than he had known himself. “Ah, perdition—the game is up!” he faintly exclaimed, and, rising from his chair, threw himself down upon the sofa, in a state of dismay and bewilderment which no words of mine are powerful enough to describe.

Quite as much anxiety had been felt on the same subject in a different quarter, during the whole of the day, at the Priory; where were still the Aubreys, who had been joined a week before by Lord and Lady De la Zouch, and by Mr Delamere, who had come over with them from the Continent. Mr Runnington had written to assure Mr Aubrey, that the first moment of his being able to procure a copy of the evidence, he would hasten down with it. As, however, nine o’clock elapsed without his having made his appearance, Mr Delamere slipped out, and without announcing his intention, ordered his groom to have his horses in readiness instantly; and within a quarter of an hour’s time was on his way to town, having left a hasty verbal message, acquainting Lord and Lady De la Zouch of the object of his sudden move. When he reached Mr Runnington’s offices, he found no one there, to his infinite disappointment. Having slept in Dover Street, he reappeared at Mr Runnington’s about ten o’clock the next morning, and found a chaise-and-four at the door, into which Mr Runnington, with a large packet under his arm, was in the act of entering, to drive down to the Priory.

“How is it—for Heaven’s sake?” said Mr Delamere, rushing forward to Mr Runnington, who was sufficiently surprised at seeing him.

“Oh, thank God! The battle’s ours!”—replied Mr Runnington with delighted excitement. “The murderer’s out!—I’ll pledge my existence that within three months’ time we have our friends back at Yatton!”

“You’re off instantly, are not you?” inquired Delamere, his face blanched with emotion.

“To be sure—won’t you come with me?” replied Mr Runnington.

“Bowl away, my boys! and here’s a guinea a-piece for you!” shouted Delamere to the postboys—and the next moment they were on their way, and at indeed a rapid pace. In somewhere about an hour and a quarter’s time, the reeking horses and dusty chaise dashed up to the hall-door of the Priory; and, as Delamere caught one or two figures standing at the windows, he waved his hand in triumph through the chaise-window. That brought Lord and Lady De la Zouch, and Mr and Mrs Aubrey, breathless to the door—out jumped Delamere, without waiting for the steps to be let down, and, grasping the hands of all four, exclaimed with enthusiasm—“Victory!—Victory!—but where is she—?”

“Miss Aubrey’s somewhere in the grounds, sir,” replied a servant.

“Mr Runnington will tell you all”—said Delamere; and springing off the step, was out of sight in a twinkling, in quest of Miss Aubrey—burning to be the first with the joyful news. He soon caught sight of her graceful figure—she was standing with her back towards him, apparently in a musing posture, gazing at the babbling rivulet. Hearing his bounding steps, she turned round, and started at seeing him.

“Oh, Kate, Kate!”—he stammered breathlessly—“By Heavens, we’ve won!”—Miss Aubrey turned very pale.

“Mr Delamere—you—you—cannot be—I *hope* you are not mistaken”—said she faintly.

“Impossible!—Impossible! I have seen—I have read it all myself! ‘Tis as sure as that the sun is shining—The game is up with the villains!” Miss Aubrey made him no answer; her cheek continued white as that of a statue; and it was absolutely necessary that he should put his arm round her—if he had not, she would really have fallen, for her knees trembled, and her heart beat violently.

“Come!—Come! My sweet, my lovely Kate! Rouse yourself!” cried he, with fond anxiety, and pressed his

lips gently on her forehead—a liberty of which she was probably not conscious, for she made no show of resistance. Presently she heaved a deep sigh, her eyes opened, and, shocked at finding herself entirely in his embrace, made a slight effort to disengage herself, but in vain. He was supporting her on one knee—for there was no bench or seat within view. She burst into tears, and they soon relieved her pent-up bosom of its excitement.

"Dearest—sweetest Kate—it's glorious news, and I have been too hasty with it!" said he, excitedly.

"No—no—Mr Delamere! I am only overpowered with joy and with gratitude! Oh, Mr Delamere, I could sink out of your sight!"

"Pho! my own angel!—Don't make me miserable by talking in that strain! The time is gone by for it!"

"Well, what *shall* I say?" cried she passionately, bursting again into tears, and turning her face from him, conscious that it was reddening.

"Say, Kate? That you will let me love you, and will love me in return! Come, my own Kate! Heaven smiles on you—smile you on me!" She spoke not—but sobbed, her face still averted from him.

"I know you won't say me nay, Kate, if it's only for the news I've brought you express"—said Delamere ardently, and imprinted a passionate kiss on her unresisting lips.

"My sweet Kate! how I have thought of you in every part of the world in which I've been"—commenced Delamere, after having a second, and a third, and a fourth time pressed his lips upon those of his beautiful and blushing mistress—and Heaven only knows what other absurdities he might have been guilty of, when, to Kate's inconceivable embarrassment, behold, a sudden turn brought them full in view of Lord and Lady De la Zouch, and Mr Runnington!

"My dear, dear Miss Aubrey," cried Lord De la Zouch, "we have come to congratulate you on this great event!" and he grasped her affectionately by the hands, and then Lady De la Zouch embraced her future daugh-

ter-in-law, whose cheeks burned like fire, while those of Mr Delamere tingled a little.

"Upon my honour, sir, you seem to have been making hay while the sun shines," said his lordship in a low tone, and laughing, having left Miss Aubrey and Lady De la Zouch together for a few moments.

"Dearest Lady De la Zouch, how did Charles bear it?" inquired Miss Aubrey.

"He bore it with calmness, though he turned very pale; but poor Mrs Aubrey was painfully excited—it was really a most affecting scene. But she is much better now—shall we return to the house?—By the way," added she slyly, "now you're come into your fortune, as the saying is, Kate—I—I suppose—eh?—Geoffry has been talking nonsense to you!" Poor Kate blushed deeply, and burst into tears.

That was a happy—happy day; and Mr Runnington, having been compelled to stay to dinner, returned home at a late hour, feeling already richly repaid for all his exertions. Miss Aubrey sat up for at least a couple of hours in her own room, writing, according to a promise she had made, a long letter to Dr Tatham; in which she gave him as full an account as she could, of the surprising and decisive event which had just happened. 'Twas quite the letter of a daughter to a fond father—full of ardent affection, and joyous anticipations of seeing him again; but as to the other little incident of the day, which concerned herself personally, Kate paused—laid down her pen—resumed it—blushed—hesitated—trembled—smiled furtively,—and at length extinguished her taper, and retired to rest, saying to herself that she would think of it, and make up her mind by the morning.

The letter went off, however, after all, without the slightest allusion to the possibility of its lovely writer becoming a future Lady De la Zouch.

But it is now high time that the reader should be put into possession of the important disclosures produced

by the Ecclesiastical inquiry ; and we must for a while lose sight of the happy Aubreys, and also of the gloomy, discomfited Gammon, in order to become acquainted with the exact state of facts which had called forth such violent and opposite emotions.

The reader may possibly bear in mind that Mr Titmouse had established his right to succeed to the Yatton property, then enjoyed by Mr Aubrey, by making out to the satisfaction of the jury, on the trial at York, that he, the aforesaid Mr Titmouse, was descended from an elder branch of the Aubrey family ; that there had existed an unsuspected female descendant of Stephen Dredlington, the elder brother of Geoffrey Dredlington, through whom Mr Aubrey derived his claim to the succession ; and that this obscure female descendant had left issue equally obscure and unsuspected—viz. Gabriel Tittlebat Titmouse—to whom our friend Titmouse was shown to be heir-at-law. In fact, it had been made out in open court, by clear and satisfactory evidence, First, that the aforesaid Gabriel Tittlebat Titmouse was the direct descendant, through the female line, of Stephen Dredlington ; Secondly, had been shown the marriage of Gabriel Tittlebat Titmouse ; Thirdly, the birth of Tittlebat Titmouse, the first, and indeed the only issue of that marriage. All these were not only proved, but unquestionable facts ; and from them, as far as descent went, the preferable right of Titmouse to that of Aubrey, resulted as an inevitable inference, and the verdict went accordingly. But as soon as, owing to the happy suggestion of the Attorney-general, a rigid inquiry had been instituted, *on the spot*, whence the oral and documentary evidence had been obtained by Mr Gammon—an inquiry conducted by persons infinitely more familiar with such matters than common lawyers—those acute and indefatigable inquisitors succeeded in making the following remarkable discovery. It was found that the two old witnesses who had been called to

prove that part of the case, on the trial, had since died—one of them recently. But in pushing their inquiries, one or two other old witnesses were met with who had not been called by Mr Gammon, even if he had been aware of their existence ; and one of these, an old man, while being closely interrogated upon another matter, happened to let fall some expressions which startled the person making minutes of the evidence ; for he spoke of Mr Titmouse's mother under three different names, *Gubbins*, *Oakley*, and *Johnson*. Now, the proof of the trial had been simply the marriage of Gabriel Tittlebat Titmouse, by banns, to Janet Johnson, *spinster*. Either, then, both the witnesses must be mistaken as to her having had other names, or there must be some strange mystery at the bottom of it—and so it at length turned out. This woman's maiden name had been Gubbins ; then she had married a rope-maker, of the name of Oakley, in Staffordshire, but had separated from him, after two or three years' quarrel-some cohabitation, and gone into Yorkshire ; where she had resided for some time with an aunt—in fact, no other a person than old Blind Bess ! She had subsequently become acquainted with Gabriel Tittlebat Titmouse ; and to conceal the fact of her previous marriage—her husband being alive at the time—she was married to Gabriel Tittlebat Titmouse under the name of "*Johnson*." Two years afterwards, this exemplary female died, leaving an only child, Tittlebat Titmouse. Shortly afterwards, his father came up to London, bringing with him his little son—and some five years subsequently died, leaving one or two hundred pounds behind him for the bringing up of Tittlebat decently—a duty undertaken by a distant relative of his father, and who had been dead some years. Of course, Titmouse, at the time when he was first presented to the reader, knew no more than the dead, of his being in any way connected with the distinguished family of the Aubreys in

Yorkshire ; nor of the unpleasant circumstances attending his mother's marriage, with which the reader has just been made acquainted. Nothing can be easier than to conceive how Mr Gammon might have been able, even if acquainted with the true state of the facts, to produce an impregnable case in court, by calling, with judgment, only that evidence which was requisite to show the marriage of Titmouse's father with Janet Johnson — viz. an examined copy of an entry in the parish register of Grilston ; of the fact of the marriage under the names specified ; and some slight evidence of the identity of the parties. How was the Attorney-general, or any one advising him, to have got at the mystery attending the name of "Johnson," in the absence of suspicion pointed precisely at that circumstance ? The defendant in an action of ejectment, is necessarily in a great measure in the dark as to the evidence which will be adduced against him, and must fight it as it is presented to him in court ; and the plaintiff's attorney is generally better advised than to bring into court witnesses who may be able, if pressed, to disclose more than is necessary or desirable !

The way in which Mr Gammon had become acquainted with the true state of the matter, was singular. While engaged in obtaining and arranging the evidence in support of the plaintiff's case, under the guidance of Mr Lynx's opinion, Mr Gammon stumbled upon a witness who dropped one or two expressions suddenly reminding him of two little documents which had been some time before put into his possession, without his having then attached the least importance to them. He was so disturbed at the coincidences, that he returned to town that night, to inspect the papers in question. They had been obtained by Snap from old Blind Bess : in fact, (*inter nos*), he had purloined them from her, on one of the occasions of his being with her in the manner long ago described, having found them in an old Bible which was in a still older canvass bag ; and they consist-

ed of, first, a letter from one James Oakley to his wife, informing her that he was dying, and that, having heard she was living with another man, he exhorted her to leave her wicked courses before she died ; secondly, a letter from one Gabriel Littlebat Titmouse to his wife, reproaching her with drunkenness and loose conduct, and saying that she knew as well as he did, that he could transport her any day he liked ; * therefore she had better mind what she was about. This letter was written in the county jail, whither he had been sent for some drunken assault. Old Blind Bess had been very feeble when her niece came to live with her ; and, though aware of her profligate conduct, had never dreamed of the connection, between the great family at the Hall, and her niece's child. These were the two documents which Mr Titmouse had destroyed, on Gammon's having intrusted them for a moment into his hands !—Though I do not attach so much importance to them as Mr Gammon did—since I cannot see how they could have been made available evidence for any purpose contemplated by Gammon—I am not surprised at *his* having done so. They were infinitely too dangerous documents to admit of his taking the opinion of counsel upon ; he therefore kept them entirely to himself, as also the discovery to which they led, not trusting his secret, even to either of his partners. Before the case had come into court, Mr Gammon was in possession of the facts now laid for the first time before the reader—contemplating, even then, the use to be thereafter made of the prodigious power he should have acquired, in aid of his own personal advancement. Thus was Titmouse base-born indeed—in fact, doubly illegitimate ; for, first, his mother had been guilty of bigamy in marrying his father ; and, secondly, even had that not been so, her marrying under a false name † had been sufficient to make the marriage utterly void, and equally of course to bastardise her issue.

* See APPENDIX.

† Ibid.

BOOK THE TENTH.

CHAPTER I.

GLANCES OF DAYLIGHT INTO A GLEN OF FRAUD, AND REPTILES SEEN WRIGGLING ABOUT IN ALARM.

SUCH was the damning discovery effected by the Ecclesiastical commission, and which would by-and-by blazon to the whole world the astounding fact, that this doubly base-born person had been enabled, by the profound machinations of Mr Gammon, not only to deprive Mr Aubrey of the Yatton estates, but also to intermarry with the Lady Cecilia, the last of the direct line of the noble Dreddingtons and Drelincourts—to defile the blood, and blight the honour, of perhaps the oldest and the proudest of the nobility of England. Upon Mr Gammon it descended like a thunderbolt. For many hours he seemed to have been utterly crushed and blasted by it. He was totally incapable of realising his position—of contemplating the prodigious and appalling consequences which must inevitably, and almost immediately, ensue upon this discovery of his secret. He lay upon the sofa the whole night without closing his eyes, or having moved a muscle since he had thrown himself down upon it. His laundress came in with his bed-candle, trimmed the lamp, stirred the fire, and withdrew, supposing him asleep. The fire went out—then the lamp—and when, about eight o'clock the next morning, his laundress reappeared, he still lay on the sofa; and a glimpse of his pale and haggard face alarmed her greatly, and she went for a medical man be-

fore he was aware of her having done so. On her returning, and informing him of what she had done, it roused him from his lethargy, and, starting from the sofa, he desired her to go back and request the medical man not to come, as it was unnecessary. Heaving profound sighs, he proceeded to his dressing-room, got through his toilet, and then sate down to the breakfast-table, and for the first time made a powerful effort to address his thoughts steadily to the awful nature of the emergency into which he was driven. Mr Quod soon after made his appearance.

"This is a very—very—ugly business, Mr Gammon!" quoth he, with a gloomy countenance. "I look upon it there's an end of the suit—eh?"

"It is not likely that we shall stir further, certainly," replied Mr Gammon, with a desperate effort to speak calmly: then there was a pause.

"And I should think the matter can't end *here*;" presently added Mr Quod. "With such evidence as this, of course they'll attack Yatton!"

"Then I am prepared to resist them," said Gammon; convinced in his own mind that the sole object of little Mr Quod's visit was to see after the payment of his bill—a reasonable anxiety, surely, considering the untoward issue of the proceedings.

"How could all this have escaped me, in getting up the case for the

trial?" said Gammon after a while, darting an anxious and furtive glance at his companion.

"Ay—I hope this will teach you common-law fellows that there's a trick or two worth knowing at Doctor's Commons!" replied Mr Quod. "D'y'e remember what I told you at starting?—How was it, d'y'e say, *you* couldn't find it out? No one could, till we did!—But, by the way, do we fight any more in the cause? Because we must decide at once—it's no use, I should say, going to the expense of a hearing!"—

"I will give you an answer in the course of the day, Mr Quod," replied Gammon with an air of repressed fury; and succeeded in getting rid, for the present, of his matter-of-fact but anxious visitor. He then reperused the whole of the evidence, and considered within himself, as well as he was able, what course he ought to pursue. He had need, truly, to do so; for he quickly found that he had to deal with an enemy, in Mr Runnington, uncompromising and unrelenting, and whose movements were equally prompt, vigorous, and skilful. That gentleman, following up his blow, and acting under the advice of Sir Charles Wostenholme, who had just returned to town for the commencement of the legal year—viz. Michaelmas Term—first of all gave notice, through Mr Pounce, of his intention to proceed with the suit for administration; but found that the enemy in that quarter, had already struck; Mr Quod having formally notified his abandonment of opposition on the part of Mr Titmouse. So far so good. Mr Runnington's next step was to go down into Staffordshire and Yorkshire, accompanied by Mr Pounce, and by his own experienced confidential clerk, in order to ascertain still more distinctly and conclusively the nature of the evidence in existence, impeaching the legitimacy of Mr Titmouse. His inquiries were so satisfactory, that within a week of his return to town, he had caused an action of ejectment to be brought for the recovery of the whole of the Yatton property; and

copies of the "Declaration" to be served on Mr Titmouse, and every tenant in possession upon the estate. Then he served notices on them, calling upon each and every of them not to pay rent in future to any one except Charles Aubrey, Esquire, or his agents by him lawfully appointed; and caused a formal demand of the title-deeds of the estate to be forthwith made upon Mr Titmouse, Messrs Bloodsuck and Son, and Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap; and also advertisements to be inserted in the newspapers, to caution all persons against advancing money on mortgage or other security of the Yatton property, "formerly in possession of, and now claimed by, Charles Aubrey, Esq., but at present wrongfully held by Tittlebat Titmouse, Esq. M.P., and for the recovery of which an action of ejectment has been commenced, and is now pending;" and also from advancing money "on the faith or security of a certain bond conditioned in the penalty of £20,000 for the payment to the aforesaid Tittlebat Titmouse, Esquire, M.P., of £10,000, with interest, on or before the 24th day of January next, and dated the 26th July 18—, and signed by Lord De la Zouch and Charles Aubrey, Esq., the same having been obtained by undue means, and on a false and fraudulent pretence of money being due from the said Charles Aubrey, Esq., to the aforesaid Tittlebat Titmouse."

These advertisements, and certain paragraphs relating to the same matter, which found their way into the newspapers, to the consternation of Gammon, came under the eye of the Duke of Tantallan, and struck him dumb with dismay and horror at so decisive and public a corroboration of his worst fears. A similar effect they produced upon Miss Macsplicuchan, who, however, succeeded in keeping them, for some time, from the observation of the unfortunate Earl of Dredlington. But there were certain other persons in whom these announcements produced an amazing degree of consternation; viz. three Jewish gentlemen—to wit, MORNECAI

GRYPE, MEPHIBOSHETH MAHAR-SHALASH-BAZ, and ISRAEL FANG, who were at present the depositaries of Mr Titmouse's title-deeds, with a lien upon them, as they had fondly imagined, to the extent of nearly seventy thousand pounds—that being the amount of money they had advanced, in hard cash, to Mr Titmouse, upon mortgage of his Yatton estates. The last of these unfortunate gentlemen—old Mr Fang—had advanced thirty thousand pounds. He had been the first applied to, and had fortunately taken a collateral security for the whole sum advanced—viz. a bond—the bond of our old friend, "THOMAS TAG-RAG, draper and mercer, of No. 375 Oxford Street, and Satin Lodge, Clapham, in the county of Surrey."

As soon as the dismayed Israelite, by his attorney, had ascertained at the office of Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, where all was confusion, that there really was a claim set up to the whole of the estates, on behalf of him who had been so recently and suddenly dispossessed of them, he exclaimed in an ecstasy, "Oh, ma Got ! oh, ma *dear* Got ! Shoo Tag-rag ! Shoo on the bond ! Loosie no time"—and he was obeyed. Terrible to tell, two big bum-hailiffs the next day walked straight into the shop of Mr Tag-rag, who was sitting in his little closet at the further end, with his pen in his hand, busily checking some bills just made out, and without the least ceremony or hesitation hauled him off, hardly giving him time to put his hat on, but gruffly uttering in his ear some such astounding words as "Thirty thousand pounds!" He resisted desperately, shouting out for help; on which all the young men jumped over the counters, and seemed to be coming to the rescue! while one or two female customers rushed affrighted into the street. In short, there was a perfect panic in the shop; though the young men merely crowded round, and clamoured loudly, without venturing upon a conflict with the two burly myrmidons of the law, who clapped their prize into a coach standing opposite—Mr Tag-rag froth-

ing at the mouth, and with impassioned gesticulation, protesting that he would have them both transported to Botany Bay on the morrow. They laughed at him good-humouredly, and in due time deposited him safely in the lock-up of Mr Vice; who on seeing that he was disposed to be troublesome, thrust him unceremoniously into the large room in which, it may be recollectcd, Mr Aubrey had been for a few minutes incarcerated, and left him, telling him he might write to his attorney. There he continued for a long while in a state bordering on frenzy.

He must indeed have fancied that the devil had made it, just then, his particular business to worry and ruin him; for what do you think had happened to him only two days before? an event which had convulsed Clapham to its centre—so much, at least, of Clapham as knew of the existence of the Tag-rags, and the Reverend Dismal Horror, his chapel and congregation. That young shepherd of faithful souls having long cherished feelings of ardent fondness towards one gentle lamb in his flock in particular, viz. Tabitha Tag-rag, the only child of the wealthiest member of his little church, took upon himself to lead her, nothing loth, a long and pleasant ramble—in plain English, Mr Dismal Horror had eloped with the daughter of his head deacon—to the infinite scandal and disgust of his congregation, who forthwith met and deposed him from his pulpit; after which his father-in-law solemnly made his will, bequeathing everything he had to a newly-established college; and the next day—being just about the time that the grim priest of Gretna was forging the bonds of Hymen for the happy and lovely couple before him, Mr Tag-rag was hauled off in the way I have mentioned: which two occurrences would have the effect of enabling Mr Dismal Horror to prove the disinterestedness of his attachment—an opportunity for which he vowed that he panted—inasmuch as he and she had become, indeed, all the world to each other—*i. e.* each

had nothing on earth, but the other. He must now go into some other line of business, in order to support his fond and lovely wife; and, as for Tag-rag, his pious purposes were frustrated altogether. There was no impeaching the validity of the bond held by the infuriate and inexorable Jew who had arrested him, and who clearly had been no party to any fraud by which, if any, the signature of Mr Tag-rag had been procured. Mr Tag-rag's attorney, Mr Snout, instantly called upon Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, to inquire into the particulars of the astounding transaction by which his client had been drawn into so ruinous a liability, but was very cavalierly treated; for he was informed that Mr Tag-rag must, in their opinion, have lost his senses, at all events his memory; for that he had deliberately executed the bond, after its nature had been fully explained to him by Mr Gammon—and his signature was witnessed and attested in the usual way, by a clerk in the office, and also in the presence of all the three partners. On hearing all this—and examining Mr Amminadab, who stated without any hesitation, as the fact in truth was, that he had been called in specially to witness Mr Tag-rag's execution of the bond, and had seen him sign, and heard him say he delivered it as his act and deed—Mr Snout hurried back to his frenzied client, and endeavoured, for a long while, with praiseworthy patience, to reason with him; explaining to him the glaring improbability of his version of the affair. This led to very high words indeed between them, and at length Mr Tag-rag actually spit in his face. Mr Snout, being a little man, and unable to resent the vile insult effectually, instantly quitted the room, expressing his firm belief that Mr Tag-rag was a swindler, and he would no more be concerned for a person of that description. Mr Tag-rag could not procure bail for so fearful an amount; so he committed an act of bankruptcy, by remaining in prison for three weeks. Down, then, came all his creditors upon him in a

heap, especially the Jew; a rattling bankruptcy ensued; the upshot of the whole being—to anticipate, however, a little—that a first and final dividend was declared of three farthings in the pound: for it turned out that friend Tag-rag had been, like many of his betters, speculating a great deal more than any one had had the least idea of. I ought, however, to have mentioned that, as soon as he had become bankrupt, and his assignees had been appointed, they caused an indictment to be preferred against Mr Titmouse, and Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, for fraud and conspiracy in obtaining the bond from Mr Tag-rag; and on the same grounds, made an application, fortified by strong affidavits, to the Lord Chancellor, to strike the last three gentlemen off the rolls. In addition to all this, the two other unfortunate mortgagees, Mordcaï Gripe, and Mephibosheth Maharshalal-hash-baz—who had no security at all for their advances except the title-deeds of the estate, and the personal covenant of Mr Titmouse—beset the office in Saffron Hill from morning to night, like a couple of frantic fiends, and nearly drove poor old Mr Quirk out of his senses. Mr Snap was peremptory and insolent; while Gammon seldom made his appearance—and would see no one at his private residence, pleading serious indisposition.

After anxious reflection, Mr Gammon did not absolutely despair of extricating himself from the perils with which he was personally environed. As for certain fond hopes of political advancement, after which, indeed, his soul had so long pined, he did not even yet abandon the hope of being able to prevail on his friend at headquarters, to whom he had undoubtedly rendered considerable political services at no little personal risk, to overlook the accident which had befallen him, in the adverse verdict for the bribery penalties, even should he fail in his motion to defeat that verdict. He had had, indeed, a distinct intimation that, that one obstacle removed, an important and in-

fluential situation under government was within his reach. But, alas! this last overwhelming misfortune—how could he possibly evade or surmount it? What human ingenuity or intrepidity could avail to extricate him from the consequences of his insane avowal to Miss Aubrey—and his counter-statements to the Duke of Tantallan and Miss Maespleuchan—to say nothing of the Earl of Dredlington? He resolved to risk it—to rely on his own resources, and the chapter of accidents. The mere presence of difficulty strung his nerves to encounter it. He resolved to rely on the impossibility of fixing him directly with a knowledge of the rottenness of Titmouse's pretensions—at all events, till a period considerably subsequent to the trial, and Titmouse's marriage with the Lady Cecilia. It occurred to him, as calculated, moreover, to aid his contemplated movements, if he could find a fair pretext for throwing overboard his partners, especially Mr Quirk, satisfied that his own uniform caution had prevented him from committing himself to them, or at least deprived them of means of proving it. He soon met with an opportunity, of which he promptly availed himself.

Some week or ten days after the commencement of the term, Mr Quirk was walking down Parliament Street, on his way to the Court of King's Bench, hoping, amongst other things, to hear the court say whether they would grant or refuse a rule *nisi* for a new trial, in a certain cause of WIGLEY v. GAMMON, which had been moved for on the first day of term by Sir Charles Wolstenholme, and which Lord Widdrington had said the court would take a day or two's time to consider. Mr Quirk's eye caught the figure of a person, a few steps in advance of him, whom he fancied he had seen before. In a few minutes' time, the old gentleman was covered with a cold perspiration; for in a young man, about thirty years old, decently dressed, thin, sallow, and wearing a depressed air, Mr Quirk recognised MR STEGGARS—a gentleman whom he had imagined to be at that moment

comfortably settled, and for some ten years yet to come and unexpired, at Botany Bay! This was the individual, it may be recollect, whose execrable breach of trust, when a clerk of Mr Parkinson's at Grilston, had led to Mr Quirk's discovery of the infirmity in Mr Aubrey's title. The fact was, that Mr Steggars had quitted England, as the reader may recollect, horribly disgusted with Mr Quirk's conduct towards him; and had also subsequently experienced some little remorse on account of his own mean and cruel conduct towards a distinguished gentleman and his family, none of whom had ever given him the slightest pretext for hostility or revenge. He had contrived to make his feelings upon the subject known to an official individual at Botany Bay, who had given him an opportunity of explaining matters fully to the authorities at home—the principal of whom, the Home Secretary—had been, and indeed continued to be, a warm personal friend of Mr Aubrey's. This minister caused inquiries to be made concerning Steggars' behaviour while abroad, which were so satisfactorily answered, as to procure a remission of the remainder of his sentence, just as he was entering upon his fourth year's serviee at Botany Bay. Immediately on his return, which had taken place only a few days before the commencement of Michaelmas term, he sought out Mr Aubrey's attorneys, Messrs Runnington, and put them fully in possession of all the facts of the case, relating to Mr Quirk's grossly dishonourable conduct in obtaining and acting upon a knowledge of the supposed defect in Mr Aubrey's title. Upon Mr Quirk's coming alongside of this gentleman, and looking at him with an anxious inquisitiveness, he encountered a fearfully significant glance—and then Mr Steggars, in a pointed and abrupt manner, crossed over the street for the purpose of avoiding him. Mr Quirk was so dreadfully disconcerted by this occurrence, that instead of going on to court, where he would have had the satisfaction of hearing

Mr Gammon's rule for a new trial refused, he retraced his steps homeward, and arrived at the office just as a clerk was inquiring for him; and who, on seeing him, put into his hands the following startling document, being a "*Rule*," which had been granted the day before, by the Court of King's Bench:—

"On reading the Affidavit of JONATHAN STEGGARS, the affidavits of James Parkinson and Charles Runnington, and the paper-writing marked A, all thereunto annexed, It is ORDERED that Caleb Quirk, Gentleman, an attorney of this Honourable Court, do, on Wednesday next, in this present term, show cause why he should not forthwith deliver up to Charles Aubrey, Esquire, the deeds and documents specified in the paper-writing thereto annexed, marked A, and also, why he should not answer the matters contained in the said Affidavits.* Upon the motion of Sir Charles Wolstenholme.

"By the Court."

"Oh murder!" exclaimed Mr Quirk faintly, and, sinking into his chair, inquired for Mr Gammon; but, as usual, he had not been at Saffron Hill that day. Giving orders to Mr Amminadab to bespeak copies immediately of the affidavits mentioned in the rule, Mr Quirk set off for Mr Gammon's chambers, but missed that gentleman, who, he learned, had gone to Westminster. The next day Mr Gammon called at the office, but Mr Quirk was absent; on going, however, into the old gentleman's room, Mr Gammon's eye lit on the above-mentioned "rule," and also on copies of the affidavits upon which it had been granted. Having glanced over them, with a quaking heart, he hastily replaced them on the desk, as he had found them, and repaired to his own room, greatly flustered—resolved to wait for Mr Quirk's arrival, and appear to be informed by him, for the first time, of the existence of the aforesaid formidable documents. While he was really buried in a reverie, with his head resting on one hand and a pen in the

other, his countenance miserably pale and harassed, Mr Quirk burst hastily into his room, with the rule and affidavits in his hand.

"Oh Lord, Gammon! How are you, Gammon?" he stammered. "Haven't seen you this age!—Where have you been? How are you, eh?" and he grasped very cordially the cold hand of Mr Gammon, which did not return the pressure.

"I am not well, Mr Quirk; but—you seem agitated!—Has anything fresh hap?"

"Fresh?—Ecod, my dear Gammon! Fresh, indeed! Here's a *new* enemy come into the field!—D—d if I don't feel going mad!—Look, Gammon, look!"—and he placed the rule and affidavits in Mr Gammon's hands, and sat down beside him.

"What!—Answer the matters in the affidavit?" quoth Gammon amazedly.—"Why, what have you been doing, Mr Quirk? And who upon earth is Jonathan Steggars?"

"Who's Steggars!" echoed Mr Quirk stupidly.

"Yes, Mr Quirk—*Steggars*. Who is he?" repeated Gammon intrepidly.

"Steggars, you know—Gammon! You recollect Steggars, of course—eh?" inquired Mr Quirk with an apprehensive stare—"Steggars; *Steggars*—you know! eh? You don't recollect! Oh, botheration! Come, come, Gammon!"

"Who is he?" again inquired Gammon, somewhat sternly.

"Oh Lud! oh Lud! oh Lud!" exclaimed Mr Quirk despairingly, "What are you after, Gammon? You don't intend—it can't be—that you're going to—eh?—It's Steggars, you know—we defended him, you know—and he got transported for embezzling that mortgage money of Mr Parkinson's! You recollect how we got hold of Mr Aubrey's story from him?" While Mr Quirk was saying all this with feverish impetuosity, Mr Gammon appeared to be, for the first time, glancing eagerly over the affidavits.

"Why—good Heavens, Mr Quirk!" said he presently, with a start—"is it possible that these statements can

* See APPENDIX.

have the slightest foundation in fact?"

"Ay, drat it—that you know as well as I do, Gammon," replied Mr Quirk, with not a little eagerness and trepidation—"Come, come, it's rather late in the day to sham Abraham just now, friend Gammon!"

"Do you venture, Mr Quirk, to stand there, and deliberately charge me with being a party to the grossly dishonourable and unprofessional conduct of which you are here accused upon oath—which, indeed, you admit yourself to have been guilty of?"

"D——d if I don't, Master Gammon!" replied Mr Quirk, slapping his hand on the table after a long pause, in which he looked completely confounded and aghast. "Why, you'll want, by-and-by, to persuade me that my name isn't Caleb Quirk—why, zounds! you'll drive me mad! You're gone mad yourself—you must be!"

"How dare you insult me, sir, by charging me with conniving at your infamous conduct?"

"Why—come!" cried Quirk, with a horrid laugh—"You don't know how we first got scent of the whole thing?—Ah, ha! It dropt down from the clouds, I suppose, into our office—oh lud, lud, Gammon! it isn't kind to leave an old friend in the lurch, at such a pinch as this!"

"I tell you, Mr Quirk, that I never had the least idea in the world that this wretch Steggars — Faugh! I should have scouted the whole thing! I would rather have retired from the firm!"

"That's it, Gammon! Go on, Gammon! This is uncommonly funny! It is, indeed, aha!" quoth Quirk, trembling violently.

"This is no time for trifling, sir, believe me. Let me tell you thus much, in all candour—that I certainly had, from the first, misgivings as to the means by which you became possessed of this information: but, considering our relative situations, I did not feel myself at liberty to press you on the point—Oh, Mr Quirk, I am really shocked beyond all bounds! What will the profession say of"—

"D—— the profession! What, d'ye suppose I must be just now thinking of *you*? Why, you'd make a dog strike its father!"

"I may have been unfortunate, Mr Quirk—I may have been imprudent; but I have never been dishonourable—and I would not for the whole creation have my name associated with this infernal transac"—

"Come, come—who wanted me to forge a tombstone, Gammon?" inquired Mr Quirk, glancing keenly but with a sort of wildness at his friend.

"Wanted you to forge a tombstone, sir!" echoed Gammon, with an astounded air.

"Ay! ay! Forge a tombstone," repeated Mr Quirk, dropping his voice, and slapping one hand upon the other.

"Upon my word and honour, Mr Quirk, I pity you! You've lost your senses!"

"You wanted me to forge a tombstone! D——d if you didn't!"

"Yon had better go home, Mr Quirk, and send for medical advice, for I am sure you're going wrong altogether!" said Gammon.

"Oh, Gammon, Gammon! Aren't you ashamed of yourself? Come—honour among thieves! Be honest for once"—

"Your conduct is so extraordinary, Mr Quirk, that I must request you to leave my room, sir."

"I sha'n't! It's *mine* too," quoth Quirk, snapping his fingers, with a desperate air.

"Then I will, sir," replied Gammon with a low bow; and, taking up his hat, moved towards the door.

"You sha'n't, Gammon — you mus'n't!" cried Quirk, but in vain—Mr Gammon had taken his final departure, leaving Mr Quirk on the verge of madness. By-and-by he went into Snap's room, who sat there the picture of misery and terror; for whereas it had always seemed to him, that he had never been fairly admitted into the confidence of his senior partners, in the important matters which had been going on for the last two years; now, that all things were

going wrong, he was candidly given credit by Mr Quirk and Mr Gammon for having lent a helping hand to everything from the beginning! In fact, he was frightened out of his wits at the terrible turn which matters were taking. 'Twas he who had to stand the brunt of the horrid badgering of the three frenzied Jews; he was included in half-a-dozen indictments for fraud and conspiracy, at the instance of the aforesaid Israelites, and of the assignees of Mr Tag-rag; and Heaven only could form a notion of what other good things were in store for him! He wondered vastly that they had not contrived to stick *his* name into the affidavits which had that day come in, and which seemed to have turned Mr Quirk's head upside down! Conscious, however, of his own innocence, he resolved to hold on to the last, with a view, in the event of the partnership blowing up, of scraping together a nice little practice out of the fragments.

Half recklessly, and half in furtherance of some designs which he was forming, Gammon followed up, on the ensuing morning, his move with Mr Quirk, by sending to him and to Mr Snap a formal written notice of his intention to retire from the partnership, in conformity with the provisions of their articles, at the end of a calendar month from the date; and he resolved to take no part at all in the matter to which Mr Quirk's attention had been so sternly challenged by the Court of King's Bench—leaving Mr Quirk to struggle through it as best he might.

CHAPTER II.

WHAT IS GAMMON TO DO?—MR TITMOUSE MAKES AN EQUITABLE PROPOSAL. TO KATE AUBREY.

WHAT was Mr Gammon now to do?

He could not stir a step in any direction for want of money—getting every hour more and more involved and harassed on this score. The Ecclesiastical suit he had given up, and Mr Quod had instantly sent in his heavy bill, requiring immediate payment—reminding Mr Gammon that he had pledged himself to see him paid, whatever might be the issue. Here, again, was an action of ejectment, on a tremendous scale, actually commenced, and vigorously carried on, with evidently unlimited funds at command, for the recovery of every acre of the Yatton property. Was it to be resisted? Where were the funds? Here he was, again, already a defendant in four indictments, charging fraud and conspiracy—proceed-

ings entailing an utterly destructive expense; and his motion for a new trial, in the action for the bribery penalty, having failed, he was now liable to pay, almost instantly, a sum exceeding £3000 to the plaintiff, for debt and costs. As for the balance of their bill against Mr Aubrey, that was melting away hourly in the taxing-office; and the probable result would be an action against them, at the suit of Mr Aubrey, for maliciously holding him to bail. Was it possible, thought Gammon, to make the two promissory notes of Mr Aubrey available, by discontinuing the actions commenced upon them, and indorsing them over at a heavy discount? He took an opinion upon the point—which was to the effect, that such a step could not then be taken, so as to

give any third party a better right against Mr Aubrey than Mr Titmouse had. Even had this, however, been otherwise, an unexpected obstacle arose in Mr Spitfire, who now held Mr Gammon at arm's length, and insisted on going forward with the actions: but he, in his turn, was, as it were, checkmated by a move of Mr Runnington's in the Court of Chancery, where he obtained an injunction against proceeding with the actions on the notes, till the result of the pending action of ejectment should have been ascertained; and, in the event of the lessor of the plaintiff recovering, an account taken of the mesne profits which had been received by Mr Titmouse.

No one, of course, would now advance a farthing on mortgage of Mr Titmouse's interest in the Yatton property; and Mr Gammon's dearly earned rent-charge of £2000 a-year had become mere waste parchment, and as such he destroyed it. The advertisements concerning Lord De la Zouch's bond had effectually restrained Mr Gammon from raising anything upon it; since any one advancing money upon the security of its assignment, must have put it in suit against his lordship, when due, in the name of Mr Titmouse, and any answer to an action by him, would of course operate against the party using his name. Mr Gammon then be-thought himself of felling the timber at Yatton; but, as if that step on his part had been anticipated, before they had got down more than a couple of trees at the extremity of the estate, down came an injunction from the Lord Chancellor, and so there was an end of all resources from that quarter. Should he try the experiment of offering to surrender Yatton without the delay and expense of defending the ejectment? He knew he should be laughed at; they must quickly see that he had no funds to fight with, even had he the slightest case to support. Mr Gammon saw that Mr Aubrey's position was already impregnable, and the notion of a compromise utterly ridiculous. As for resources

of his own, he had none, for he had been exceedingly unfortunate in his dealings in the British and Foreign funds, and had suffered severely and unexpectedly through his connection with one or two of the bubble companies of the day, which his own fostering care had brought into a short-lived existence. In fact he was liable to be called upon, at any moment, for no less a sum than £3000, and interest, which had been advanced to him on security of a joint and several bond given by himself and Mr Titmouse; and he lived in daily dread lest the increasing frequency of the rumours to his discredit should get to the ears of this particular creditor, and precipitate his demand of repayment. To the vexation occasioned by this direct pecuniary embarrassment, and the impossibility of retrieving himself by a move in any direction, being, in short, in a complete *dead-lock*, were to be added other sources of exquisite anxiety and mortification. To say nothing of the perilous legal and criminal liabilities which he had incurred, the consciousness of his appearing an atrocious liar, and indeed an impostor, in the eyes of the Duke of Tantallan, of the Earl of Dredlington, of Miss Mac-splanchan, of the Aubreys, of *Miss Aubrey*, in fact, of every one who saw or heard of what he had done, stung him almost to madness. Considerations of this kind were infinitely more insupportable than all the others by which he was oppressed, put together. And when he reflected that the Lord Chancellor, to whose favourable notice he had ever fondly aspired, and to a considerable extent, successfully, had been put in possession of all the heavy charges made against him, on the score of fraud and conspiracy, by means of the various motions made before his lordship, and the affidavits by which they were supported, he felt his soul withered within him. In short, it must surely appear, by this time, that the Devil had, in his dismal sport, got his friend Mr Gammon up into a corner.

In like manner Mr Titmouse had

his lesser troubles—for he was all of a sudden reduced nearly to the verge of literal starvation. His creditors of every kind and degree seemed actuated by the spirit of the law of the Twelve Tables—which, when a debtor was insolvent, permitted his creditors to cut him, bodily, into pieces, in proportion to the respective magnitudes of their claims against him. Actions were commenced against him by the three Jews, on his covenants to repay the principal and interest due on the mortgages; half-a-dozen more were pending against him on bills of exchange and promissory notes, which he had given for various sums of money which had been lent him, though he had no means of proving the fact, on monstrously usurious terms. Scarcely was there a single tradesman in town or country with whom he had ever dealt, who had not sued, or was not about to sue him. Every article of furniture both at Yatton and at his lodgings—great or small, cabs, harness, horses—all had disappeared: and, but for the protection afforded to his person by privilege of Parliament,* he would have been pounced upon by at least a hundred ravenous and infuriate creditors in an instant, and never been seen or heard of any more, except on the occasion of some feeble and vain cry for relief under the Insolvent Debtors' Act. There he would have appeared as it were in a den—like a poor dog in the midst of infuriate hyenas, all striving to snap at him. He had been obliged, on coming up from Yatton, to borrow five pounds from poor Dr Tatham!—who, though infinitely surprised at the application, and greatly inconvenienced by compliance with it, lent him cheerfully the sum he asked for; the little scamp pledging himself to enclose the Doctor a five-pound note, by the first post after his reaching town. That, however, even had he ever intended giving the matter a thought, he could no more have done, than sent Dr Tatham the mitre of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Where-

fore it came to pass, that the little Doctor was obliged to postpone his long meditated purchase of a black coat and breeches, indefinitely. The morning after Titmouse's return, he betook himself to Saffron Hill, which he reached just as Mr Quirk and Mr Snap, deserted by Mr Gammon, were endeavouring, in great tribulation and terror, to concoct affidavits in answer to those on which the rule in the Court of King's Bench had been obtained. Mr Amminadab, with a little hesitation, yielded to his importunities, and allowed him to go into Mr Quirk's room.

"Oh, Lud! Oh, Lud!—you—you—you—infernall little villain!" cried out Mr Quirk, hastily approaching him, pale and stuttering with fury—and violently thrust him towards the door.

"I say!—I say!—Come, sir! I'm a member of"—

"I'll member you, you scamp! you impostor! Get out with you!—get out!"

"So help me — ! I'll go to some other attor"—gasped Titmouse, ineffectually struggling against Mr Quirk.

"Eugh!—Beast!" exclaimed Snap, who kept by the side of Mr Quirk, ready to give any assistance which might be requisite.

"What have I—eh?—What have I done—demme!—Come, come—hollo! hands off"—cried Titmouse.

"If ever—if ever—if ever you dare show your cursed little face here—again"—sputtered Mr Quirk, trembling with rage.

"This is a breach of privilege!—On my life I'll—I really will—I'll complain to the House to-night." By this time he had been forced through the outer passage into the street, and the door was closed furiously. A little crowd was instantly collected around him; and he might possibly have thought of addressing it in terms of indignant eloquence, but he was deterred by the approach of a constable, with a very threatening countenance, and slunk down Saffron Hill in a truly shocking state of mind. Then he hurried to Thavies' Inn, pale as death—and with a tremulous

* See APPENDIX.

voice inquired for Mr Gammon ; but that gentleman had given special orders to be invariably denied to him. Again and again he called—and was as often repulsed ; and though he lingered, on one or two occasions, for an hour at least, in order to waylay Mr Gammon, it was in vain. Letter after letter he sent, but with no better effect ; and at length the laundress refused to take them in.

Gammon *dared* not see Titmouse ! not because he feared Titmouse, but himself.

The House of Commons was sitting, unusual as was such an occurrence at that time of the year ; but Parliament had been called together on a special urgency, and a fierce and desperate contest was carrying on between the Opposition and the Ministers, whose very existence was at stake, and almost nightly divisions were melting down their majority, till they were within an ace of being in a positive minority. Under these circumstances, although Mr Titmouse's position had become a matter of notoriety, and he could no longer exhibit in public even the outside show and trappings of a man of fashion, beyond his mere personal finery, which had become precious indeed, because he saw no means of replacing it, and though he was *cut*, as a matter of course, by every one out of doors, yet he found he had one friend, at least, in his extremity, who scorned to imitate the fickle and perfidious conduct of all around him. That frank and manly individual was no less a person, to his honour be it spoken, than the Secretary of the Treasury—and whipper-in—Mr Flummery ; who always spoke to him in the most cordial and confiding manner, and once or twice even asked him to join his dinner-table, at Bellamy's. On one of these occasions, Mr Titmouse resolved to put Mr Flummery's friendship to the test, and boldly asked for a "*place*." His distinguished friend appeared certainly startled, for a moment, and then evidently felt inwardly tickled, as was evinced by a faint twitching at the corners of his mouth. He proceeded,

however, in a confidential manner, to ask Mr Titmouse as to his familiarity with financial matters ; for, in the most sacred confidence, it did so happen that, although no one knew it but himself and one other person, there was sure to be a vacancy in a certain office within a fortnight at furthest ; and without saying anything further, Mr Flummery laid his finger on his lip, and looked steadfastly at Titmouse, who did similarly ; and within half an hour's time, made one of a glorious majority of two, obtained by the triumphant Ministry.

Titmouse was now in excellent spirits concerning his future prospects ; and felt that, if he could but contrive to hold on, during the fortnight intervening between him and his accession to office, all would be well. He therefore conceived he had nothing to do, but apply to one or two friends, whom he had accommodated with loans, for repayment. But, alas ! Mr O'Doodle manfully acknowledged that his exchequer was empty just then ; and Mr M'Squash said he really fancied he had repaid Mr Titmouse the hundred pounds lent him, but would look and see. Then Mr Titmouse ventured to apply to Mr O'Gibbet who was Titmouse's debtor to the tune of some five hundred pounds. He called Mr Titmouse aside, and in a winning manner intimated the delight it would have afforded him to respond to the call of Mr Titmouse, under ordinary circumstances ; but the fact was, that he felt placed in a painfully embarrassing position, on account of grave doubts as to the right of Mr Titmouse either to have lent the money at all, or, consequently, receive repayment of it. The astute lawyers would have called this, setting up the *jus tertii* ; Mr O'Gibbet protesting that he looked upon himself, in point of conscience, as a trustee of the money for the real owner ; and, till he should have been discovered, bound to retain it—so pleasant is sometimes the performance of one's duty ! Titmouse could not in the least appreciate these exquisite scruples ; but knowing Mr O'Gibbet's in-

fluence over Mr Flummery, feigned to acquiesce in the propriety of what was advanced by Mr O'Gibbet, who, on being pressed, *lent* him five pounds.

Finding that those whom he had till then imagined bound to consult his interests, had, in so unprincipled and ungrateful a manner, deserted him, he resolved to be true to himself; and bent all the powers of his mind to the contemplation of his present circumstances, and how he should act with advantage. After due and deep reflection, a felicitous stroke occurred to him. He did not know the exact state of the question with reference to the right to the possession of Yatton—little dreaming that, in point of fact, Mr Aubrey was at that moment virtually reinstated in the enjoyment of that fine estate. Now, it occurred to Mr Titmouse as probable, that his opponent would catch at any fair offer of a compromise, since he—Titmouse—had unquestionably the advantage over him at present, having nine-tenths of the law on his side—viz. possession; and if he were to propose to split their differences, by making an offer of his hand and heart to Miss Aubrey, it could do no harm, and might be attended with the happiest results. How was she to know the desperate shifts to which he was driven at present? And if he could but contrive, consistently with his pledge to Mr Flummery, to give her an inkling of the brilliant prospects that awaited him! But I am fortunately able to give the reader an exact copy of a letter which, after infinite pains, two days being spent over it, he sent to Miss Aubrey; and which was duly forwarded to her, and deposited in her hands, as she alighted from her horse, on returning from a ride with Mr Delamere and Lord De la Zouch. Here follows that skilful and touching performance;—which was in the words, letters, and figures following—that is to say—

“House of Commons,
“Wednesday Nov. —, 18—.

“(Private.)

“Madam,—hoping That this Will not Disapoint you Through Strange-

ness (which I own Looks Somewhat So) at First sight of my adressing This Epistle to You, to Say Ever since I Have had The unhappiness to be a Widdower Since the Death of Lady Cecilia Titmouse of which There Is Many False accounts Every Thing Goes Entirely Wrong (For the present) with me, all For Want of a Lady Which w^d. feel That Conubial Interest in me That is So delightful In the Married State. I was Honour'd With writing To You soon After I was so Happy as to Get the Property But Suppose you could not Have Got It Seeing I got No Ans^r. And Natrally suposed There Was obstacles In The Way For it Was Settled Soon as You might have Heard That I was to Mary my Cousin (The Lady Cecilia) whom I Loved Truly till Death cut Her Short On her Way To an Erly Grave, Alas. I know It is In Dispute whr. yr. respectable Brother or I are Owners of Yatton You See The Law which Gave It me Once *may Give it Me Again and No Mistake*—who knows (in this uncertain Life) whatever Turns Up I can (Betwixt Ourselves) assure You There Is *Something In The Wind* For me w^h. dare not Say More Of at this Present. But Suposing You & I shall Hit it what Say You if I should Propose dividing The Estate betwixt Him & Me & *Settling All my Half on You* And as To the Title (w^h. at present I Am Next to) what say You To your Brother and I Tossing up for it When It comes for I am Sorry to hear His Lordship is breaking, and I know Who I shd. Like To see Lady Drelincourt, oh what a happiness Only To think Of, As They are dividing very soon (And they Do Run It *Uncommon Fine*, But Ministers Must Be Suported or The Country Will Go to the Dogs) Must Close Begging an Answer direct-ed to Me Here, And Subscribe myself;

“Hn^d. and dear Madam,
“Yr^s. Most Obediently,

“Miss AUBREY,
“Vivian Street.”

“T. TITMOUSE.

Now, methinks, I bear some hasty reader exclaim,—what kind of stuff

could the writer of such a preposterous letter have been made of? But this is unphilosophical. Every man after his kind. Impelled by his own feelings and wishes, such as they were, and limited by the range of his own wretched optics, how upon earth was he to see things in the light in which they appeared to Miss Aubrey,—or to yourself, intelligent, experienced, and refined reader? But in your way, you may, on occasion, act really as stupidly as Titmouse!

"I hope, Kate, you have not been giving this gentleman any encouragement!" quoth Delamere, when he had read the above. It formed a topic of pleasant merriment when they all met at dinner—a right cheerful party, consisting solely of the Aubreys, Lord and Lady De la Zouch, and Delamere. Mr Aubrey had returned from town with important intelligence.

"Mr Runnington is steadily and patiently unravelling," said he, as they sat in unrestrained converse, after dinner,—(I must take the opportunity of saying that Miss Aubrey looked as beautiful as ever, and in brilliant spirits)—"one of the most monstrous tissues of fraud that ever was woven by man! We sometimes imagine that Mr Gammon must have had in view the securing Yatton for himself! The firm of Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, are completely overwhelmed with the consequences of their abominable conduct!—I understand they have terribly taken in the Jews—to the amount of at least sixty or seventy thousand pounds of hard cash; and one of them, it seems, on discovering that he has no real and effectual security, nearly succeeded in hanging himself the day before yesterday: but suddenly recollecting that it would render his policy void, he stopped half-way—that is, only half-hanged."

"What's this I see in the paper about a Mr Tag-rag?" inquired Lord De la Zouch:—and Mr Aubrey told him the miserable condition to which Tag-rag had been reduced by the alleged chicanery of the firm of Quirk, Gammon, and Snap.

"Mr Runnington seems to be man-

aging matters with great vigour and skill," said his lordship.

"Admirably! admirably! I never in my life saw or heard of such complete success as attends every step he takes against the enemy; he is hourly pressing them nearer and nearer to the verge of the precipice, and cutting off all retreat. They would fight, but have no funds! Look at the administration suit!" Mr Aubrey then proceeded to mention two important circumstances which had come to his knowledge since his former visit to town. First, an offer was understood to have come direct from Mr Gammon, to abandon the defence to the ejection, on condition of his receiving, on behalf of Mr Titmouse, the sum of two thousand pounds; but Mr Runnington had peremptorily refused to listen to any proposal of the kind, and the action was, at that moment, in full progress, with every prospect of there being no real defence even attempted. The next piece of intelligence was, that Messrs Screw and Son, the solicitors to the Vulture Insurance Company, had called on Messrs Runnington, on learning that they were the solicitors of the party to whom letters of administration had been granted, and intimated that the directors—those discreet and candid gentlemen—"taking all the circumstances of the case into their consideration," had determined to offer no further opposition to the payment of the policy on the life of the late Lady Stratton. Mr Screw talked very finely about the high principle and good feeling which ever actuated that distinguished Company; but he did not tell Mr Runnington what was the real cause of their abandoning their opposition, which was this—that before their "commission" to examine their sole witness, Dr Podagra, could have reached China, they had accidentally received authentic intelligence of his death; he having been killed by an enlightened but infuriate crowd, for vaccinating the infant of one of the Chinese! Under these circumstances, Mr Runnington agreed to the terms proposed on the part of

the Company—viz. that the action should be discontinued forthwith, each party pay their own costs, and the whole amount of the policy, minus the £2000 which had been advanced to Lady Stratton, be paid to Mr Aubrey within a month from the day of discontinuing the action. Though Kate vehemently protested against it, she was at length persuaded to allow her brother to act according to the manifest intentions of the venerable deceased; and he, in his turn, received a gratifying assurance that she would have given him, under the special circumstances of the case, no anxiety respecting his bond for £2000 given to Lady Stratton! Thus was Kate no longer a dowerless maiden; having at her absolute disposal a sum of thirteen thousand pounds, in addition to which, in the event of their being restored to the possession of Yatton, she would be in the receipt of the income left her as a charge upon the estate by her father—viz. five hundred a-year.

While the cheering sunshine of returning prosperity was thus beaming with daily increasing warmth and brightness upon the Aubreys,

"And all the clouds that lower'd upon their house,"

were,

"In the deep bosom of the ocean buried"—the sun of that proud and weak old man, the Earl of Dredlington, was indeed going down in darkness. The proceedings which have been laid at length before the reader, arising out of the extraordinary termination of the inquiry set on foot by the Ecclesiastical Court, and quickly ending in the adoption of measures for the immediate recovery of Yatton, had attracted far too much of public attention to admit of their being concealed from the Earl, comparatively secluded from the world though he was. But the frightful confirmation of his assertion concerning what had occurred between himself and Mr Gammon, respecting Titmouse, appeared to make no commensurate impression upon a mind no longer capable of appreciating it. He had been seized by a partial

paralysis, shortly after the last interview between himself, Mr Gammon, and the Duke of Tantallan; and it was evident that his reason was failing rapidly. It was perhaps a merciful dispensation; for it appeared that the cup of his misery and mortification was not even yet full.

That other monstrous fabric of absurdity and fraud, built upon public credulity, the Gunpowder and Fresh Water Company, suddenly dropped to pieces, principally on account of its chief architect, Mr Gammon, being unable to continue that attention and skill, by which it had been kept so long in existence. It suddenly exploded, involving everybody concerned in it, in ruin. The infatuated, and now dismayed, shareholders, and the numerous and designing creditors, came crowding round the more prominent of the parties concerned, clamorous and desperate. Meetings were called from time to time, producing, however, no other results, than fearfully extending the prospect of liability incurred. The shareholders had fondly imagined that they could repose with confidence on the provision inserted in the prospectus, and in the deed of settlement—viz. that no one was to be liable beyond the amount of their shares actually subscribed for: alas! how dreadful the delusion, and how quickly dissipated! The houses of Lord Dredlington, the Duke of Tantallan, and others, were besieged by importunate creditors; and at length a general meeting was called, at which resolutions were passed, strongly reflecting upon the Earl of Dredlington and Mr Gammon; and directing the solicitor concerned for the rest of the shareholders, to file a bill against the Earl and Mr Gammon, for the purpose of compelling them to pay all the debts incurred by the Company! More than this, it was threatened that unless satisfactory proposals were promptly received from, or made on behalf of, the Earl of Dredlington, he would be proceeded against as a TRANER liable to the bankrupt-laws, and a docket forthwith struck against him! Of this crowning indignity im-

pending over his head, the poor old peer was fortunately not conscious, being at the moment resident at Poppleton Hall, in a state not far removed from prostrate imbecility. The Duke of Tantalan was similarly threatened ; and, alarmed and enraged almost to a

pitch of madness, resolved to take measures for completely exposing and punishing the individual, to whose fraudulent plausibility and sophistries he justly attributed the calamity which had befallen him and the Earl of Dredlington.

CHAPTER III.

THE SCORPION IN THE FIERY CIRCLE. MR GAMMON'S SKILFUL EXIT.

"Out of this nettle Danger, I'll yet pluck the flower Safety,"—said Mr Gammon to himself, as he sat inside one of the coaches going to Brighton, towards the close of the month of November, being on the morning after the explosion of the Gunpowder and Fresh Water Company. Inextricably involved as he appeared, yet, conscious of almost boundless internal resources, he did not despair of retrieving himself, and defeating the vindictive measures taken against him. His chambers were besieged by applicants for admission — Titmouse among them ; whose senseless pertinacity, overheard by Gammon as he sat within, while his laundress was being daily worried by Titmouse, several times excited Gammon almost up to the point of darting out with a murderous impulse...! Old Mr Quirk also sent daily letters, in a piteous strain, and called besides daily, begging to be reconciled to Gammon ; but he sternly turned a deaf ear to all such applications. In order to escape this intolerable persecution, at all events for a while, and in change of scene and air, unpropitious though the weather was, seek to recruit his impaired health and spirits, he had determined upon spending a week at Brighton ; telling no one, however, except his

old and faithful laundress, his destination ; and instructing her to say that he was gone, she believed, into Suffolk, but would certainly return to town within a week. His pale and harassed features showed, indeed, how much he required repose and relief ; but for these he sought in vain. He felt not a whit the better after a two days' stay, though the weather had suddenly cleared up, the sky become clear and bright, and the air brisk and bracing. Whithersoever he went, he carried about him a thick gloom which no sunshine could penetrate, no breezes dissipate. He could find rest nowhere ; neither at home nor abroad, neither alone nor in company, neither sleeping nor waking. His brow was clouded by a stern melancholy, his heart was bursting with a sense of defeat, shame, exposure, mortification ; and with all his firmness of nerve, he could not contemplate the future, but with a shudder of apprehension. In fact, he was in a state of unintermitting and intense irritability and excitement from morning to night. On the evening of the third day after his arrival, the London paper forwarded to him as usual from the neighbouring library, contained a paragraph which excited him not a little ; it being to the effect, that a specified solicitor of eminence, had been, the

day before, appointed by the Lord Chancellor to that very office, which Gammon knew his lordship had all along destined for him; one which he felt that he could have filled to admiration; which would have given him permanent *status* in society; the salary attached to it being, moreover, £1800 a-year! Gammon laid down the paper—a mist came before his eyes—and a sense of desolation pervaded his soul. After a while his eye lit on another part of the paper—gracious Heavens!—there were three or four lines which instantly roused him almost into madness. It was an advertisement, stating that he had ABSCONDED, and offering a reward of £200 to any one who would give information by which he might be discovered and apprehended!

"*Absconded!*" he exclaimed aloud, starting up, and his eye flaming with fury—"accursed miscreants! I'll quickly undeceive them!"—Instantly unlocking his paper-case, he sat down and wrote off a letter to the editor of the newspaper, giving his full name and address; indignantly denying his having ever attempted to abscond; stating that he should be in London within forty-eight hours; and requiring an ample apology for the gross insult and libel which had been perpetrated, to be inserted in the next number of his paper. Then he wrote off to the solicitor, Mr Winnington, who had conducted all the town proceedings in the cause of *Wigley v. Gammon*, alluding in terms of indignation and astonishment to the offensive advertisement, and assuring him that he should, within forty-eight hours, be found, as usual, at his chambers, and prepared to make an immediate and satisfactory arrangement in respect of the damages and costs which were now due from him. In a similar strain he wrote to Mr Runnington, who had maintained throughout, personally, a cautious courtesy towards Mr Gammon, begging him to postpone signing judgment in the action of *Doe on the demise of Aubrey v. Roe*, till the last day of term, as he had a new and final proposal to make, which might have

the effect of saving great delay and expense. He added, that he had also a proposition to offer upon the subject of Lord De la Zouch's bond and Mr Aubrey's promissory-notes, and begged the favour of a line in answer, addressed to him at his chambers in Thavies' Inn, so that he might find it on his arrival in town. To a similar effect, he also wrote to the solicitor working the docket struck against Mr Tag-rag; and also to the one employed on behalf of the shareholders in the Gunpowder and Fresh Water Company:—in all his letters, reprobating, in terms of keen indignation, the unwarrantable and libellous use of his name which he had just observed, and making appointments for the individuals addressed to call at his chambers, on the day after his arrival in town.

Having thus done all in his power to counteract the injurious effects likely to follow so premature and cruel a measure as that which had been taken, in offering a reward for his apprehension as an absconded felon, he folded up, sealed, and directed the letters, and took them himself to the post-office, in time for that night's post. That he was really terribly excited, may be easily believed. He did not touch the dinner which he found laid for him on his return, but sat on the sofa, absorbed in thought, for nearly an hour: when he suddenly rang the bell, ordered his portmanteau to be packed, and his bill made out immediately. He then secured a place in that night's mail, which was starting for town at half-past eight o'clock: at which hour he quitted Brighton, being the only inside passenger—a circumstance affording him an ample opportunity for reflection, and of which doubtless he availed himself—at all events, certain it is, that he closed not his eyes in sleep, during the whole of the journey. Greatly to the surprise of his laundress, he made his appearance at his chambers, between six and seven o'clock in the morning, rousing her from bed. He had thus, it will be observed, reached town contemporaneously with his own letters; and as all the appointments which he had made,

were for the day *after* that of his arrival, he had secured a twenty-four hours' freedom from interruption of any sort, and resolved to avail himself of it, by keeping within doors the whole of the time, his laundress denying him, as usual, to any one who might call. He asked her if she had seen or heard of the atrocious advertisement which had appeared in yesterday's paper? She replied, in tears, that she had; and added, that no doubt to that circumstance were to be attributed the calls made yesterday from morning to night—an announcement seeming to heighten the excitement under which Mr Gammon was evidently labouring. As soon as his lamp had been lit, he opened his paper-case, and wrote the following letter:—

"THAVIES' INN, Wednesday Morning.

"DEAR HARTLEY,—As I have not missed an annual meeting of our little club for these ten years, I shall be found at my place, to-night, at nine to a moment: that is, by the way, if I shall be admitted, after the execrable advertisement concerning me which appeared in yesterday's papers, and the writer of which I will give cause to repent to the latest day he lives. I came up this morning suddenly, to refute, by my presence, and by my acts, as more than one may feel, the villainous falsehoods about my absconding. *Entre nous*, I am somewhat puzzled, just now, certainly—but never fear! I shall find a way out of the wood yet. Expect me at nine, to a minute.—Yours as ever, O. GAMMON.

"HARRY HARTLEY, Esq.,
"Flibberton Square."

This he sealed and directed; and requesting his laundress to put it into the office in time for the first post, without fail—he got into bed, and slept for a couple of hours: when he awoke somewhat refreshed, made his toilet as usual, and partook of a slight breakfast.

"You did not suppose I had absconded, Mrs Brown, eh?" he inquired, with a melancholy smile, as she cleared his breakfast-table.

"No, sir; indeed I did not believe

a word of it!—You've always been a kind and just master to me, sir—and"—she raised her apron to her eyes, and sobbed.

"And I hope long to continue so, Mrs Brown. By the way, were not your wages due, a day or two ago?"

"Oh yes! sir—but it does not signify, sir, the least; though on second thoughts—it does, sir; for my little niece is to be taken into the country—she's dying, I fear—and her mother's been out of work for!"

"Here's a ten-pound note, Mrs Brown," replied Mr Gammon, taking one from his pocket-book—"pay yourself your wages; write me a receipt as usual, and keep the rest on account of the next quarter, if it will assist you just now, when you are in trouble." She took the bank-note with many expressions of thankfulness; and but for her tears, which flowed plentifully, she might have noticed that there was something deadly, in the eye of her kind and tranquil master. On her retiring, he rose, and walked to and fro for a long time, with folded arms, wrapped in profound meditation—from which he was occasionally startled unpleasantly, by hearing knocks at his door, and his laundress assuring the visitor that Mr Gammon was out of town, but would return on the morrow.

It was a cheerless November day, the snow fluttering lazily through the foggy air; but his room was made snug and cheerful enough, by the large fire which he kept up. Opening his desk, he sat down, about noon, and wrote a long letter—in the course of which, however, he repeatedly laid down his pen—got up and walked about, heaving deep sighs, and being occasionally exceedingly agitated. At length he concluded it, paused some time; folded it up, and sealed it. Then he spent at least two hours in examining all the papers in his desk and iron-safe. A considerable number of them he burned, and replaced and arranged the remainder carefully. Then again he walked up and down the room. The cat, an old and favourite one, which had been for several years an

inmate of the chambers, attracted his attention, by rubbing against his legs. "Poor puss!" he exclaimed, stroking her gently on the back; and, after a while, the glossy creature sidled away, as it were reluctantly, from his caressing hand, and lay comfortably and gracefully on the hearth-rug, as before. Again he walked to and fro, absorbed in melancholy reflection for some time; from which he was roused, about five, by Mrs Brown bringing in the spare dinner—which, having barely tasted, he soon dismissed, telling her that he felt a strange shooting pain in his head, and that his eyes seemed sometimes covered by a mist: but that he doubted not his being well enough to keep his appointment at the club—as she knew had been his habit for years. He requested her to have his dressing-room prepared by a quarter to eight, and a coach fetched by eight o'clock precisely. As soon as she had withdrawn, he sat down and wrote the following letter to the oldest and most devoted personal friend he had in the world:—

(“Private and confidential”).

"MY DEAR.—I entreat you, by our long unbroken friendship, to keep the enclosed letter by you, for a fortnight; and then, with your own hand, and alone, deliver it to the individual to whom it is addressed. Burn the note which I am at this instant writing to you, the instant you shall have read it; and take care that no eye see the enclosed but *hers*—or all my efforts to secure a little provision for her will be frustrated. In the corner of the top drawer of my cabinet will be found, folded up, a document referred to in the enclosed letter—in fact, my will—and which I wish you, as an old friend, to take the earliest opportunity of discovering, *accidentally*. You will find the date all correct, and safe. But whether my fiendish persecutors will allow it to have any effect, situated as are my affairs, is more than doubtful. Still I will throw away no chance in favour of the idolised being who has occupied so much of my last

thoughts. Call here to-morrow—at any hour you please—and say that you have called to see me, according to my appointment (be sure about that), and produce and show the enclosed ordinary invitation, to any one who may inquire, as the only communication which you have received from me since my return from Brighton. Bear all this in mind, by the value you set upon my friendship: whatever you may then see or hear, be firm, and prudent.—O. G.

"Wednesday."

In this letter he enclosed the long letter and the note already mentioned, and having sealed and directed the whole, with elaborate distinctness, he threw his cloak round him; went with his packet to the post-office; and with his own hand, after an instant's hesitation, dropped it into the box, and returned to his chambers.

Then he took another sheet of paper, and wrote thus:—

"DEAR VIPER,—I doubt whether, after all, there will be a Dissolution; but, at any rate, I will perform my promise, and be ready with what you wish, for Sunday week.—Yours ever,

"O. G.

"P.S.—I shall call upon you on Saturday, without fail."

This he folded up and directed, and proceeded to commence the following:—

"THAVIES' INN, Wednesday.

"DEAR SIR,—I have finally determined to make every sacrifice in order to extricate myself, with honour, from my present embarrassments. You will, therefore, as soon as you get this, please to sell out all my"—here he laid down his pen; and Mrs Brown presently announcing that everything was ready in his dressing-room, he thanked her, and proceeded to dress. He was not more than a quarter of an hour over his toilet. He had put on his usual evening attire—his blue body-coat, black trousers, a plain shirt and black stock, and a white waistcoat—scarcely whiter, however, than the face of him who wore it.

"I am going for the coach now, sir," said Mrs Brown, knocking at the door.

"If you please," he replied, briskly and cheerfully—and the instant that he had heard her close the outer door after her, he opened a secret spring drawer in his desk, and took out a small glass phial, with a glass stopper, over which was tied some bladder, to preserve its contents from the air; then he carefully closed the drawer. His face was ghastly pale; his knees trembled; his hands were cold and damp as those of the dead. He took a strong peppermint lozenge from the mantelpiece, and chewed it, while he removed the stopper from the bottle, which contained about half a drachm of the most subtle and potent poison which has been discovered by man—one extinguishing life almost instantaneously, and leaving no trace of its presence, except a slight odour, which he had taken the precaution of masking and overpowering, with that of the peppermint. He returned to get his hat, which was in his dressing-room; he put it on—and in glancing at the glass, scarcely recognised the ghastly image which it reflected.

His chief object was, to complete the deception he intended practising on the Insurance Company with whom he had effected a policy on his life for £2000—and also to delude everybody into the notion of his having died suddenly, but naturally. Having stirred up the large red fire, and made a kind of hollow in it, he took out the stopper, and dropped it, with the bladder which had been tied over it, into the fire. Then he took his pen, freshly dipped in ink, in his right hand; kneeled down on the fender, close to the fire; faintly whispered "*Oh Emma!*" poured the whole of the deadly poison into his mouth, and succeeded in dropping the phial into the very heart of the fire—falling down the next instant on the hearth-rug, oblivious, insensible—*dead*. However it might have been, that the moment after he had done this direful deed, he would have GIVEN THE WHOLE UNIVERSE, had it been his, to have undone

what he had done, he had succeeded, for the present, in effecting his object.

Poor Mrs Brown's terror, on discovering her master stretched senseless on the floor—his hat pushed partly down over his eyes in the act of falling—may be imagined. Medical assistance was called in, but only to announce that "the vital spark had fled." It was clearly either apoplexy, said the intelligent medical man, or an organic disease of the heart. Of this opinion were the astute coroner and his jury, without hesitation. The deceased had evidently been seized while in the act of writing to some broker. [Gammon had no more "*stock*" of any sort, for all he had written that letter, than the eat which had unconsciously witnessed, and been for a moment disturbed by, his death.] Mr Hartley came before the jury, and, producing the note which he had received, spoke of the disappointment which they had all felt on account of Mr Gammon's non-arrival. The other letters, the appointments which he had made for the morrow, the evidence which he had taken care to enable his laundress to give, all these things were decisive—it was really "scarcely a case requiring an inquest;" but as they had been called, they returned a verdict of "Died by the Visitation of God." He was buried, a few days afterwards, in the adjoining churchyard, (St Andrew's), where he lies mouldering away, quietly enough, certainly; but whether, in the language of the sublime burial-service which his successful fraud had procured to be read over his remains, "*in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ,*" is another, and a fearful question.

His 'friend' was faithful and discreet, obeying the injunctions of the deceased, to the letter. The 'individual' alluded to in Mr Gammon's note was a beautiful girl, whom he had seduced under a solemn promise of marriage; who was passionately attached to him; whose name he had uttered when on the eve of death; and to whom he had, some six months

before, bequeathed the amount of the policy. Though his creditors were, of course, entitled to every farthing of the £2000, out of which he had so artfully swindled the Insurance Company, they generously allowed her, in consideration of her peculiar and melancholy situation, and of the will which Mr Gammon had made in her

favour, to receive the sum of three hundred pounds. It sufficed to support her during the few months of suffering and shame which were allotted to her upon earth, after the death of her betrayer; not far from whose remains were then deposited the blighted beauty of her whom he had loved, only to betray and destroy.

CHAPTER IV.

THE EARL OF DREDDLINGTON'S BANKRUPTCY AND DEATH ; AND LORD DRELINCOURT APPEARS ON THE SCENE.

WITH its architect, fell that surprising fabric of fraud and wrong, the rise and fall of which are commemorated in this history—a fabric which, if it had “risen like an exhalation,” so like an exhalation had disappeared, and with it all the creatures which had peopled it. Though Mr Runnington’s vigilance and ability had set matters into such a train, that, had Mr Gammon lived to continue his consummate tactics, he could not have delayed for any considerable length of time Mr Aubrey’s restoration to Yatton, yet the sudden and unexpected death of Mr Gammon greatly accelerated that event. Notwithstanding the verdict of the coroner’s inquest, both Mr Aubrey and Mr Runnington, and in fact many others, strongly suspected the true state of the case—viz. that, in the desperation of defeat and dreaded exposure, he had destroyed himself.

Towards the close of the Term, Mr Runnington went to the proper office of the Court of King’s Bench, in order to ascertain whether Mr Titmouse had taken the requisite steps toward defending the actions of ejectment commenced by Mr Aubrey, and found that, though the prescribed period had elapsed, he had not done so; in other words, that he had “*SUFFEAEED JUDGMENT BY*

DEFALCATION.” Delighted, though not much surprised by this discovery, Mr Runnington resolved at once to follow up his victory. ‘Twas only a short and simple process that was requisite to effect such great results. He took a single sheet of draft paper on which he wrote some half-dozen lines called an “*Incipitur*,” as if he were going to copy out the “declaration” in ejectment, but stopped short about the fifth line. This sheet of paper, together with another containing his “Rule for Judgment,” he took to the Master’s office, in order that that functionary might “*SIGN JUDGMENT*”—which was done by simply writing in the margin of what Mr Runnington had written, the words—“*Judgment signed, 23d November 18—*,” then impressing above it the seal of the court; and behold, at that instant, the property in the whole of the Yatton estates had become vested in Mr Aubrey again!

The next step requisite was to secure the possession of the property; for which purpose Mr Runnington immediately procured a *WRIT OF POSSESSION*, (*i.e.* a writ requiring the sheriff of Yorkshire to put Mr Aubrey into actual possession). This he got sealed; and then obtained a *WARRANT* from the

sheriff to his officers, to execute the writ. Now the sheriff might, had it been necessary, have roused, nay, was then bound to raise the whole *posse committatus*, in order to compel submission to his authority ; and I can assure the reader that the whole *posse committatus* would have answered his summons on that occasion eagerly—but it was needless. Who was there to resist Mr Aubrey at Yatton ? The transference of the possession became under these circumstances a slight matter-of-fact affair, and went off in this wise. The under-sheriff of Yorkshire drove up in his gig to the Hall, where he found Mr Parkinson waiting his arrival; no breaking open of doors was necessary ; and in a word or two, informed Mr Parkinson, with a smile, that he then delivered the possession to him for and on account of Charles Aubrey, Esquire, his heirs and assigns, for ever—and after remarking, “what a fine estate it was, and in very good order, *considering*,” he drove off. I may add, that to save the useless expense of some hundred writs of possession, “*attornments*” were taken from all the tenants—i. e. written acknowledgments that they held under Charles Aubrey, Esquire, as their sole, true, and proper landlord. This done, that gentleman was reinstated in all that he had been dispossessed of, as absolutely, and to all intents and purposes, as if the events of the last three years had been but a *dream*—as if such persons as Tittlebat Titmouse, and Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, had never existed ; and Mr Griffiths the steward, and Mr Parkinson, by way of commemorating the event, opened a couple of bottles of port-wine, which, with the efficient assistance of Mr Waters and Mr Dickons, the upper and under bailiffs, Tonson the gamekeeper, and Pumpkin the gardener, were quickly emptied amidst shouts—in which ‘tis hoped the good-natured reader will join—of “Hip, hip, hurrah !—Hip, hip, hurrah !—Hip, hip, hurrah ! HURRAH !” Then phlegmatic Mr Dickons stepped out into the court-yard, and, by way of further relieving his excited feel-

ings, flung his heavy ashen walking-stick up a surprising height into the air ; and when he had caught it on its descent, as he grasped it in his huge horny hand in silence, he shook it above his head with the feeling that he could have smashed a million of Titmice in a minute, if he could have got among them. Then he thought of Mrs Aubrey and Kate, and up went the stick again, higher even than before—by which time they had all come out into the yard, and shouted again, and again, and again, till their voices rung, and echoed in the air, and raised an uproar in the rookery behind them.

While this result of his triumphant exertions was being thus celebrated at Yatton, Mr Runnington was stirring himself to the utmost in London, in order to extricate Mr Aubrey from all his pecuniary embarrassments—the chief of which were, his two promissory notes for £5000 each, with interest, and the actions depending upon them—the joint bond of himself and Lord De la Zouch for £10,000 and interest—and the action pending for the balance of Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap’s bill—viz. £1446, 14s. 6d. Undoubtedly, these matters occasioned him some trouble and anxiety ; but his experienced tact, and vigilance, and determination, overcame all obstacles. The balance of Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap’s abominable bill of costs, melted away and totally disappeared, in the heat of the taxing office ; and with the aid of certain summary applications, both to the Lord Chancellor and to the common-law judges, and after a good deal of diplomacy, Mr Runnington succeeded in getting into his hands, cancelled, the above-mentioned two notes, on payment to Mr Spitfire, for and on account of Mr Titmouse, of £250, of which Mr Titmouse, by the way, got £15, the remainder being claimed by Spitfire in respect of costs. The bond for ten thousand pounds, which was found in the iron safe of the late Mr Gammon, was delivered up by Messrs Quirk and Snap, on certain hints being given them by Mr Runnington of the serious consequences of refusal. Not

satisfied with this, Mr Runnington obtained from Mr Titmouse a formal and solemn release and discharge, to Mr Aubrey, his heirs, executors, and administrators, of all claims, debts, damages, sums of money, demands, costs, charges, bills, bonds, notes, accounts, reckonings, expenses, judgments, executions, actions, and suits whatsoever, (to adopt the curt language of the law), either at law or in equity.

But how stood the matter of Mr Titmouse's liabilities to Mr Aubrey, in respect of the mesne profits during the last two years and more? Why, he owed Mr Aubrey a sum of some twenty-five thousand pounds—not one farthing of which would ever see its way into the pockets of him who had been so cruelly defrauded of it!—The greatest trouble of Mr Runnington, however, was the extorting of the Yatton title-deeds from the three Jews, Mordecai Gripe, Israel Fang, and Mephishosheth Maharshalal-hash-baz. Unhappy wretches! they writhed and gasped as though their very hearts were being torn out; but they had no help for it, as their own legal advisers told them; since the right of Mr Aubrey to his title-deeds, was as clear as his right to the estates; and their resistance to his claim would only entail on them additional, serious, and fruitless expense. They grinned, chattered, stuttered, and stamped about in impotent but horrible fury; and, if they could, would have torn Mr Gammon out of his grave, and placed his body, and those of Messrs Quirk and Snap, over a slow fire!

These gentlemen were not, however, the only persons who had been astounded, dismayed, and defeated, by Mr Gammon's *leap into the dark*. To say nothing of Mr Wigley, who might now whistle for his debt and costs, and many other persons who had rested all their hopes upon Mr Gammon's powers and his responsibility, his sudden death precipitated total ruin upon his weak aristocratical dupe and victim, the poor old Earl of Dredlington. In addition to the formidable movement against his lordship and Mr Gammon in the Court of Chancery, on the part of their co-

shareholders and adventurers, for the purpose of securing them to be declared, the Earl and Mr Gammon, liable for all the debts contracted by the Gunpowder and Fresh-Water Company, the creditors, rendered impatient and desperate by the sudden death of Mr Gammon, began to attempt daily to harass the unfortunate Earl with personal importunities for payment of their demands, at his residence in Grosvenor Square, and at Poppleton Hall. At the former they were, of course, uniformly encountered by the answer that his lordship was both ill, and out of town. Upon that, down to his lordship's country residence, went the chief of his infuriate creditors, not believing the answer they had received at his lordship's town-house; but at Poppleton, the Earl was of course denied to them, and with a peremptoriness of manner, which, excited as they were, they converted into insolence and defiance, and a determined *denial* to his lordship's creditors. Upon this, they took the opinion of counsel upon three points. First, whether a peer of the realm could be made a bankrupt if he became a trader; secondly, whether the Earl of Dredlington's active connection with the Gunpowder and Fresh-Water Company constituted him a trader within the meaning of the bankrupt laws; and, lastly, whether the facts stated amounted to an act of bankruptcy. To this it was learnedly answered—First, that a peer could clearly be made a bankrupt if he traded; as an Earl of Suffolk had been declared a bankrupt by reason of an act of bankruptcy committed by him in buying and selling of wines, (per Lord Chancellor Hardwicke, in *ex parte Meymot*, 1 Atkyn's Reports, p. 201). Secondly, that the Gunpowder and Fresh-Water Company was one of such a nature as constituted its members "traders" within the meaning of the bankrupt laws. Thirdly, that the facts stated showed the committing of an act of bankruptcy, on the part of the Earl of Dredlington, by "beginning to keep his house." Upon this, the more eager and reck-

less of his lordship's creditors instantly struck a docket against him : and thereupon, down came the messenger of the court to take possession of his lordship's houses and effects, both at Grosvenor Square, Poppleton Hall, and in Cornwall, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland—that is, as to the last four, if he could discover them. At Poppleton he was sternly refused admission ; on which he produced his authority, and protested that, if further denied, he would immediately proceed to effect an entrance by main force, come what might, and those who resisted must take the consequences !

After a brief affrighted pause on the part of those within, he was admitted—and immediately declared himself to be in possession, under the bankruptcy, and by the authority of the Lord Chancellor, of the premises, and everything upon them ; at the same time announcing to the dismayed inmates, that he would do nothing to give the slightest annoyance, or occasion apprehensions, to the noble bankrupt personally. This unusual occurrence found its way into the newspapers of the next day, which brought, accidentally, under the notice of Mr Aubrey, the lamentable condition of his haughty yet fallen kinsman. He hurried off, in alarm and agitation, to Mr Runnington, and requested him immediately to put himself into communication with the Earl's solicitor, whoever he might be, with a view to saving him, if possible, from the indignity and ruin with which he was threatened ; and then himself drove down to Poppleton, to tender his services in any way that might appear most desirable. He was shocked, indeed, at finding the house, and everything in it, in formal possession of the bankruptcy messenger ; but much more so, on learning the deplorable condition of the Earl personally. It appeared that he had unfortunately witnessed, during a brief lucid interval, and while he was being assisted out of his carriage on his return from an airing, the arrival of the messenger,

and his altercation with the servants at the door ; and that, on being made acquainted with the true nature of the proceeding, he staggered back into the arms of Miss Macspleuchan, and was soon afterwards seized with another fit of paralysis. All this Mr Aubrey, on his arrival, learned from Miss Macspleuchan—whom he knew only by name—and who communicated the dismal tidings, in an agony of grief and agitation. The physician and apothecary were with the Earl, when Mr Aubrey arrived ; and, finding that he could render no personal service to his suffering kinsman, he returned to town, assuring Miss Macspleuchan that she would see him again on the morrow—and that he would, in the meanwhile, do all in his power to avert from the Earl the immediate effects of his fearful imprudence.

Faithful to his promise, he instructed Mr Runnington to do everything in reason to rescue the Earl, and, in his person, the honour of the family, from the impending misfortune. 'Twas, however, all in vain. Two days afterwards, and before Mr Runnington had acted upon the instructions given to him by Mr Aubrey, the latter received intelligence by express from Poppleton, that the Earl was dying ; that he was conscious of his rapidly approaching end, and had expressed a wish to see Mr Aubrey, before he died. When he arrived, he was at once ushered into the Earl's bedchamber, and found the Duke of Tantallan sitting on one side of the bed, and Miss Macspleuchan on the other ; she was weeping in silence, and her left hand was grasped between the thin white hands of the Earl, whose face was turned towards her. His snow-white hair and wasted features, and the expression of mingled misery, feebleness, and affection that were in his eyes, fixed heavily upon Miss Macspleuchan, occasioned Mr Aubrey painful emotion. The Earl seemed a mere skeleton ! Shortly after Mr Aubrey had entered the room, Miss Macspleuchan leaned down to the Earl's ear, and, in a

whisper, informed him of Mr Aubrey's arrival. He did not seem at first to have heard, or at least comprehended, what she said; but, a few moments afterwards, opened his eyes a little wider than they had been before, and his lips quivered as if with an effort at speaking. Then he feebly extended both his thin arms towards Miss Macspleuchan, who was still leaning over him, and placed them tremblingly round her neck, from which, however, in a moment or two, they suddenly fell; the lower jaw also fell. The poor Earl was dead—and Miss Macspleuchan, with a faint sigh, sank back exhausted, and for a moment insensible, into the arms of the nurse who stood beside her, and who, assisted by a female attendant, immediately removed her from the room. The Duke of Tantallan remained sitting where he was, but with his face averted, and covered by his hand: and Mr Aubrey continued standing at the foot of the bed, his eyes fixed mournfully on the fallen features of his noble but unhappy kinsman. Neither spoke for some time. At length the Duke, deeply affected, slowly rose, and quitted the chamber in silence, followed by Mr Aubrey, as those entered who were to commence the earliest offices for the dead.

The Duke undertook all the arrangements for the funeral; and after some melancholy conversation with his Grace, concerning the shocking state in which the Earl had left his affairs, and having offered to provide, should it be necessary, for Miss Macspleuchan, Mr Aubrey took his departure.

"Is the carriage at the door?" he inquired of the servant who stood in the hall expecting his approach.

"Yes, my lord," he replied—his words causing Lord Drelincourt almost to start back, a step or two; and he changed colour. Then he entered his carriage, and continued in a melancholy and subdued mood during the whole of the drive up to town. He had, indeed, now become Lord Drelincourt—an event thus announced the next morning to the

great world in the columns of the obsequious *Aurora*.

"Yesterday, at his residence, Poppleton Hall, Hertfordshire, in his seventieth year, died the Right Hon. the Earl of Dredlington, G.C.B., F.C.S., &c. &c. His lordship was Fifth Earl of Dredlington, and Twentieth BARON DRELINCOURT. The Earldom (created in 1667) is now extinct; but his lordship is succeeded in the ancient barony of Drelincourt (created by writ, 12th Henry II.) by CHARLES AUBREY, Esq. of Yatton, in Yorkshire, the representative of the younger branch of the family, who is now 21st Lord Drelincourt, and has just succeeded in establishing his title to the whole of the Yatton property, which about three years ago, it may be recollectcd, was recovered in an extraordinary manner (which is now, we believe, the subject of judicial inquiry) by Tittlebat Titmouse, Esq., at present M.P. for Yatton. His lordship (who is in his thirty-sixth year) took a double first-class at Oxford, and sat for several years as member for Yatton. He married, in 18—, Agnes, sole daughter and heiress of the late Colonel St Clair, who fell in the Peninsular war, and has issue by her ladyship, two children, Charles, born in 18—, and Agnes, born in 18—. His lordship has no brothers, and only one sister, who, it is whispered, is likely soon to form an alliance with the only son and heir of a noble Lord whose estates adjoin those of Lord Drelincourt."

Till Yatton could be got ready for their reception, they had taken, as a temporary residence, a furnished house in Dover Street, only a few doors' distance from that of Lord De la Zouch; and on his arrival from Poppleton Hall, Lord Drelincourt found LADY DRELINCOURT, and his sister, had not yet returned from their afternoon's drive. When they drew up to the door, however, the closed shutters and drawn blinds apprised them of the melancholy event which had taken place. On hearing that Lord Drelincourt was alone in the drawing-room, where he had been for upwards

of an hour, they rushed hastily upstairs, and in a few moments Lord and Lady Drelincourt had fondly embraced each other, and Miss Aubrey, full of eager affection, had embraced both of them ; and then, quitting the room, quickly returned with Charles and Agnes, now—little unconscious creatures !—the Honourable Charles and the Honourable Agnes Aubrey. Surely it was not to be expected that any of them should entertain poignant feelings of sorrow for the death of an individual who had totally estranged himself from them, and treated every member of their family with offensive and presumptuous insolence — with the bitterest contempt ; who, when he knew that they were destitute and all but perishing, had kept cruelly aloof as ever, without once extending towards them a helping hand. Still they had regarded the afflicting circumstances which attended, and hastened, their lofty kinsman's death, with sincere commiseration for one so weak and misguided, and whose pride had had, indeed, so signal and fearful a fall. These were topics which afforded scope for sad but instructive conversation and reflection ; and before Lord and Lady Drelincourt had laid their heads on their pillows that night, they again devoutly returned thanks to Heaven, for the happy restoration which had been vouchsafed to *them*, and offered sincere and fervent prayers for its guidance in every stage of their future career.

This event, of course, threw them again, for a time, into mourning. Lord Drelincourt attended the funeral of the late Earl, which took place at Poppleton, and was plain and private ; and a few days afterwards, yearning to see Yatton once again, and anxious also to give his personal directions concerning numerous matters requiring them, he accepted an offer of a seat in the carriage of Lord De la Zouch, who was going down for a few days to Fotheringham, on business of importance. Lord Drelincourt agreed to take up his abode at Fotheringham during his brief stay in Yorkshire, and to give no one at Yatton a pre-

vious intimation of his intention to pay a visit to them—purposing, the morning after his arrival at Fotheringham, to ride over quietly, alone and unexpectedly, to the dear place of his birth, and scene of such signal trials, and expected joys of restoration and reunion.

'Twas about four o'clock, in the afternoon of a frosty day in the early part of December ; and Dr Tatham was sitting alone in his plainly-furnished and old-fashioned little study, beside the table on which Betty, his old housekeeper, had just laid his scanty show of tea-things—the small, quaintly-figured round silver tea-pot having been the precious gift, some thirty years before, of Madam Aubrey. On his knee lay open a well-worn parchment-covered Elzevir edition of *Thomas à Kempis*, a constant companion of the Doctor's, which he had laid down a few moments before, in a fit of musing—and was gazing in the direction of the old yew-tree, a portion of which, with a grey crumpling corner of his church, at only some two dozen yards' distance, was visible through the window. On one side of his book-shelves hung his surplice on one peg, and on another his rusty gown ; and on the other his well-worn shovel-hat, and walking-stick. Over the mantelpiece were suspended two small black profile likenesses of old Squire Aubrey, and Madam Aubrey, which they had themselves presented to the Doctor. Though very cold, there was but a handful of fire in the little grate ; and this, together with the modicum of brown sugar in the sugar-basin, and about two small spoonfuls of tea, which he had just before measured out of his little tea-caddy, into the cup, in order to be ready to put it into his tea-pot, when Betty should have brought in the kettle—and four thin slices of scantily buttered brown bread—all this, I say, seemed touching evidence of the straitened circumstances in which the poor Doctor was placed. His clothes, too, clean, and threadbare, down even to his gaiters—suggested the same reflection to the beholder.

The five pounds which he had scraped together for purchasing a new suit, Mr Titmouse, it will be remembered, had succeeded in cheating him out of! —His hair was of a silvery white; and though evidently a little cast down in spirits, the expression of his countenance was as full of benevolence and piety, as ever. He was, moreover, considerably thinner than when he was last presented to the reader; and well he might be, for he had since undergone great privation and anxiety. He—he, peaceful unfounding old soul!—had long been followed with pertinacious bitterness and persecution, by two new inhabitants of the village—viz. the Rev. Smirk Mudflint, and Mr Bloodsuck, junior. The former had obtained a lease from Mr Titmouse of the little structure which had formerly been Miss Aubrey's school, and turned it into an Unitarian chapel—himself and family residing in part of the building. He preached every Sunday at Dr Tatham, turning his person, habits, office, and creed into bitter ridicule; and repeatedly challenging him, from his pulpit, to an open discussion of the points in difference between them!

By means of his "moral" discourses every Sunday morning, and his "political" discourses every Sunday evening—and which he used all his powers to render palatable to those who heard him—he was undoubtedly seducing away many of the parishioners from the parish church: a matter which began visibly to prey upon the Doctor's spirits. Then Mr Bloodsuck, too, was carrying on the campaign briskly against the parson—against whom he had got a couple of actions pending at the suit of parishioners, in respect of his right to certain tithes which had never before been questioned by any one. Only that very day the impudent jackanapes—for such, I am sure, you would have pronounced Mr Barnabas Bloodsuck at first sight—had sent a peremptory and offensive letter to the Doctor, which had been designed by its writer to have the effect of drawing him into a sudden compromise;

whereas the Doctor, with a just sense and spirit, had resolved never in any way to suffer his rights, and those of his successors, to be infringed. Many and many a weary walk to Mr Parkinson's office at Grilston, had these persecuting proceedings of Bloodsuck's cost the Doctor; and also considerable and unavoidable expense, which, had he been in any other hands than those of good Mr Parkinson, must by this time have involved the Doctor in utter ruin, and broken his heart. Still, generous according to his means, the good soul—bless him!—had, on his last visit to Grilston, purchased and brought home with him a couple of bottles of port-wine, which he intended to take on Christmas-day to the poor brother parson in an adjoining parish, to whom I alluded in the early part of this history. All these matters might well occasion Dr Tatham anxiety, and frequent fits of despondency, such as that under which he was suffering, when he heard a gentle tapping at his door, while sitting in his study, as I have described him. "Come in Betty," quoth the Doctor, in his usual kind and quiet way, supposing it to be his old housekeeper, with his tea-kettle; for she had gone with it a few minutes before, across the yard, to the well, leaving the front door ajar till her return. As he uttered the words above mentioned, the door opened. He sate with his back towards it, and finding, after a pause, that no one entered or spoke, he turned round in his chair to see the reason why, and beheld a gentleman standing there, dressed in deep mourning, and gazing at him with an expression of infinite tenderness and benignity. The Doctor was a little of a believer in the reality of spiritual appearances; and, taken quite off his guard, jumped out of his chair, and stared for a second or two in mute amazement, if not even apprehension, at the figure standing silently in the doorway.

"Why! Bless—bless my soul—can it be!"—he stammered, and the next instant perceived that it was in-

deed, as I may say, the *desire of his eyes*—Mr Aubrey, now become, as the Doctor had a few days before heard from Mr Parkinson, Lord Drelincourt.

"Oh my dear, old, revered friend! Do I see you once again?" exclaimed his lordship in a tremulous voice, as he stepped hastily up to the Doctor, with his arms extended, and, grasping his hands with vehement pressure, they both gazed at each other for some moments in silence, and with tears in their eyes—Lord Drelincourt's soul touched within him, by the evident alteration which had taken place in Dr Tatham's appearance.

"And is it indeed true that God has once more gladdened my eyes with the sight of you, my dear friend?" at length faltered the Doctor, gazing fondly at Lord Drelincourt.

"It *is* your old friend, Charles Aubrey! dearest Doctor! God bless you, revered friend and instructor of my youth!" said Lord Drelincourt, with a full heart and a quivering lip: "I am come, you see, once more to Yatton, and first of all to you; and in your presence to acknowledge the goodness of God, for he has been very good to me!"

"The Lord God of thy fathers bless thee!" exclaimed Dr Tatham solemnly; and Lord Drelincourt reverently received the benison, recollecting the occasion of his once before receiving it from the same saintly lips. A few moments afterwards he sate down, opposite the Doctor, in the only spare chair there was in the room, and they were instantly engaged in eager and affectionate converse.

"Why, Mr Aubrey," quoth the Doctor with a smile, but also a slight embarrassment, "I had forgotten—Lord Drelincourt, how strangely it sounds!"

"Yes, it is true, such is now my name; but, believe me, I am not yet reconciled to it, especially, dearest Doctor, in your presence! Shall I ever be as happy as Lord Drelincourt, as I have been as Charles Aubrey?"

"Ay, ay, dear friend, to be sure you will! 'Tis in the course of God's

providence that you are raised to distinction, as well as restored to that which is your own! Long may you live to enjoy both! and, I hope, *at Yatton*," he added earnestly.

"Oh, can you doubt it, my venerable friend? My heart is only now recovering the wounds it received in being torn from this dear spot!"

"And Mrs Au—I mean Lady Drelincourt. God Almighty bless her! and Kate—sweet, dear Kate! Well! She has not changed her name yet, I suppose?"

"Not yet," replied Lord Drelincourt with a cheerful smile.

"And do you mean to say that you are all coming to old Yatton again?" inquired the Doctor, rubbing his hands.

"Coming to Yatton again? 'Tis a little paradise to all of us! Here we wish to live; and when we follow those who have gone before us, *there* we wish to rest!" said Lord Drelincourt solemnly, and he pointed towards the churchyard, with a look that suddenly filled the Doctor's eyes with tears, for it brought full before them the funeral of Mrs Aubrey.

"I have something for you," said Lord Drelincourt after a pause, taking out his pocket-book, "from my wife and sister, who charged me to give it into your own hands, with their fervent love;" and he gave two letters into the Doctor's hands, which trembled with emotion as he received them.

"I shall read them by-and-by, when I am alone," said he, as, gazing fondly at the superscriptions, he placed the two letters on the mantel-piece, with a poor appearance of calmness!—

"Come in! come in!" quoth the Doctor quickly, hearing a knocking at the door—"that's Betty. You have not forgotten old Betty, have you?" said he to Lord Drelincourt, as the good old woman opened the door in a flustered manner, with the kettle in her hands, and dropped an awful curtsy on seeing Lord Drelincourt, whom she instantly recognised.

"Well, Betty," said he with infinite cordiality, "I am glad to see

you again, and to hear that you are well!"

"Yes, sir!—if you please, sir!—thank you, sir!"—stammered Betty, curtseying repeatedly, and standing, with the kettle in her hand, as if she did not intend to come in with it.

"That will do, Betty," quoth the Doctor, looking delighted at Lord Drelincourt's good-natured greeting of his faithful old servant; "bring it in! And Thomas is quite well, too," he added, turning to Lord Drelincourt—Thomas being Betty's husband, both of whom had lived with the Doctor for some eighteen or twenty years:—Thomas's business having been to look after the Doctor's nag, while he kept one, and now to do odd jobs about the little garden and paddock. After one or two kind inquiries about him, "I must join you, Doctor—if you please," said Lord Drelincourt, as Betty put the kettle on the fire; "you'll give me a cup of tea"—

"A cup of tea? Ay, to be sure! Betty! here," said he, beckoning her to him, and whispering to her to bring out the best tea-things, and to run out into the village for a couple of tea-cakes, an ounce of the best green tea, and some eggs and butter, and half a pound of lump sugar—for the Doctor was bent upon doing the thing splendidly, on so great an occasion; but Lord Drelincourt, who overheard him, and had asked to take tea with him only that he might not delay the Doctor's doing so—for Lord Drelincourt had not yet dined—interposed, declaring that if anything of the sort were done, he would leave immediately; adding, that he expected his horses at the door every moment, and also that Lord De la Zouch, who had come over with him from Fotheringham, and had come down to the Hall, would presently call, to join him on his way home. This secured Lord Drelincourt's wishes—and you might, within a few minutes' time, have seen him partaking of the Doctor's humble beverage, while they continued in eager and earnest conversation. Lord Drelincourt had that morning had a

long interview with Mr Parkinson, from whom he had learned the wretched life of persecution which the poor Doctor had led for the last two years—listening to it with the keenest indignation. The Doctor himself softened down matters a good deal, in the account which *he* gave Lord Drelincourt—but his lordship saw at once that the case had not been in the least overstated by Mr Parkinson; and, without intimating his intentions to the Doctor, resolved upon forthwith taking certain steps which, if known to two conspicuous persons in the village, would have made them shake in their shoes.

"What's that, Doctor?" suddenly inquired Lord Drelincourt, hearing a noise as of shouting outside. Now, the fact was, that the appearance of Lord Drelincourt, and Lord De la Zouch, and their two grooms, as they galloped down the village on their way to the Hall (from which Lord Drelincourt, as I have stated, had walked to the vicarage, whither he was to be followed by Lord De la Zouch), had created a huge sensation in the neighbourhood; for Lord Drelincourt, rapidly as he rode in, was soon recognised by those who were about, and the news spread like wildfire that "my lord the squire" had come back, and was then at Yatton—a fact which seemed to be anything but gratifying to Messrs Bloodsuck and Mudflint, who were talking together, at the moment when Lord Drelincourt asked the question of Dr Tatham, at the door of Mr Mudflint; whose face seemed to have got several degrees sallower within a quarter of an hour, while Mr Bloodsuck looked quite white. There was a continually increasing crowd about the front of the vicarage; and as they got more and more assured of the fact that Lord Drelincourt was at that moment with Doctor Tatham, they began to shout "hurrah!" So—

"What's that?" inquired Lord Drelincourt.

"Ah!—I know!" cried the Doctor, with not a little excitement;

"they've found you out, bless them! —hark!—I have not heard such a thing I don't know how long—I wonder they don't set the bells a-ringing! —Why, bless me! there's a couple of hundred people before the door!" exclaimed he, after having stepped into the front room, and reconnoitered through the window. Though the gloom of evening was rapidly deepening, Lord Drelincourt also perceived the great number that had collected together, and his eye having caught the approaching figure of Lord De la Zouch, for whom, and the grooms, the crowd made way, he prepared to leave. Lord De la Zouch dismounted, and, entering the vicarage, shook hands with the utmost cordiality with the Doctor, whom he invited to dine and sleep at Fotheringham on the morrow, promising to send the carriage for him. The little Doctor scarce knew whether he stood on his head or his heels, in the flurry of the moment; and when he and Lord Drelincourt appeared at the door, and a great shout burst from those present, it was with difficulty that he could resist his inclination to join in it. It was growing late, however, and they had a long ride before them: so Lord Drelincourt, having stood for some moments bareheaded and bowing to all around, and shaking hands with those who pressed nearest, following the example of Lord De la Zouch, mounted his horse, and waving his hand affectionately to Dr Tatham, rode off amidst the renewed cheers of the crowd. From that moment worthy Dr Tatham had regained all his former ascendancy at Yatton!

As the two peers sat together over their claret that evening, the fate of the Rev. Mr Mudflint, and Barnabas Bloodsuck, junior, "gentleman, &c.," was sealed. The more that they talked together about the wanton and bitter insult and persecution which those worthies had so long inflicted, upon one, surely, of the most inoffensive, peaceable, and benevolent beings upon the earth, Dr Tatham, the higher rose their indignation, the sterner their determination to inflict condign punishment

on his enemies. The next morning Lord De la Zouch wrote up to town, directing instructions to be given to Mr Winnington, who had conducted the proceedings in the actions of Wigley *v.* Mudflint, and Wigley *v.* Bloodsuck, to issue execution forthwith. Lord Drelincourt also did his part. Almost every house in the village was his property, and he instructed Mr Parkinson immediately to take steps towards summarily ejecting the two aforesaid worthies from the premises they were respectively occupying—convinced that by so doing he was removing two principal sources of moral filth and mischief, from the village and neighbourhood; for they were the founders and most active members of a sort of spouting-club, for radical and infidel speechifying, and their presence and influence alone kept the pestilent club together.

Early the next morning Lord Drelincourt returned to the Hall, having appointed several persons to meet him there, on business principally relating to the restoration of the Hall to its former state, as far as was practicable; at all events, to render it fit for the reception of the family, within as short a period as possible. According to an arrangement he had made before quitting town, he found, on reaching the Hall, a gentleman from London, of taste and experience, to whose hands was intrusted the entire superintendence of the contemplated reparations and restorations, both internal and external, regard being had to the antique and peculiar character of the mansion—it being his lordship's anxious wish that Lady Drelincourt and Miss Aubrey, on their return, should see it, as nearly as might be, in the condition in which they had left it. Fortunately, the little Vandal who had just been expelled, had done little or no permanent or substantial injury. There was the same great irregular mass of old brickwork,—with its huge stacks of chimneys, and clock-turret and vane surmounting the old square tower, just as they had ever known it,—only requiring a little pointing. That fine old relic, the castellated

gateway, clad in ivy, with its grey, crumbling, stone-capped battlements, and escutcheon over the point of the arch, had suffered no change; even the quaint, weatherbeaten sundial stood in the centre of the grass-plot, within the court-yard, as they had left it. The yew-trees still lined the high walls, surrounding the court-yard; and the fine old clump of cedars of Lebanon was there—green, stately, and solemn, as in days of yore. The moment, however, that you passed the threshold of the Hall, you sighed at the change that had taken place. Where were now the armed figures, the pikes, bows, guns, spears, swords, and battle-axes, and the quaint old pictures of the early ancestors of the family of the Aubreys? Not a trace was to be seen of them!—and it gave Lord Drelincourt a pang, as his eye travelled round the bare walls. But the case was not desperate. All the aforesaid pictures still lay rolled up in the lumber-room, where they had continued, as articles utterly valueless, ever since Mr Titmouse had ordered them to be taken down. They had been brought from their obscurity, and now lay on the floor, having been carefully unrolled, and examined by the man of taste, who undertook quickly to remove the incipient ravage of mould and dirt at present visible, and to have them suspended in their former position, in such a state as that only the closest scrutiny could detect any difference between their present and former condition. The other relics of antiquity—viz. the armour—had been purchased by the late Lady Stratton at one of the sales of Titmouse's effects, occasioned by an execution against him, and were still at her late residence, and of course at Lord Drelincourt's disposal, as her ladyship's administrator. These, on his seeing them, the man of taste pronounced to be fine and valuable specimens, and undertook to have them also in their old places, and in a far better condition, even than before. Lord Drelincourt sighed repeatedly, as he went over every one of the bare and deserted rooms in the mansion—nothing

being left except the beautiful antique mantelpieces of inlaid oak, and the oak-panelling of the different apartments, which, as a part of the freehold, could not be seized as the personal property of Mr Titmouse. His creditors had swept off, from time to time, everything that had belonged to him. The hall, the dining-room, breakfast-room, drawing-rooms, the library, the bed-rooms, dressing-rooms, boudoirs of Mrs Aubrey and his sister, the long galleries, the rooms in which Charles and Agnes used to romp and play about—were all now bare and desolate, and the echoes of the footfalls and voices of himself and his attendants, in passing through them, struck Lord Drelincourt's heart with sadness. But all this was to be easily and quickly remedied; for a *carte blanche* was given to the man of renovation at his elbow, who undertook within two, or at most three months' time, to leave nothing for the eye or the heart to sigh for—guided, moreover, as all his movements would be, by those who were so deeply interested in their success.

On reaching the two rooms in the north-eastern extremities of the building, the windows of which commanded a view of nearly three-fourths of the estate, he gazed around him in silence. There was nothing to shock the eye or pain the heart; for as Mr Titmouse had been restrained from cutting timber, behold! what a sight would be seen when, in the approaching spring, the groves and forests, stretching far and wide before him, should have put on all their bravery!—And he found on inquiry, and going over a portion of the grounds, that Mr Waters and Dickons had kept pretty sharp eyes about them, and maintained everything in infinitely better condition than could have been expected. Mr Tonson had, moreover, looked keenly after the game; and Pumpkin undertook, by spring-time, to make his gardens and greenhouses a sight delightful to behold. Mr Griffiths was desired to re-engage as many of the former servants of Mr Aubrey, as he could; and informed Lord Drelincourt

of two, in particular, who had signified their anxious wish to him on the subject—viz. Mrs Jackson, the house-keeper, who had lived in that capacity with a brother of hers at York, on quitting the service of Mrs Aubrey. She was, of course, to be immediately reinstated in her old place. The other was Harriet, Miss Aubrey's maid, who, it may be recollectcd, was so disconsolate at being left behind by Miss Aubrey, who had secured her a place at the late Lady Stratton's, at whose house she still lived, with several of the other servants, the establishment not having been yet finally broken up. The poor girl nearly went wild with joy on receiving, a short time afterwards, an intimation, that as soon as she could conveniently do so, she might set off for town, and resume her duties as ladies'-maid to Miss Aubrey.

Finding, on inquiry, that there was not a tenant upon the estate, whose rent had not been raised above that which had been paid in his time, Lord Drelincourt ordered the rent of all to be reduced to their former amount, and inquiries to be made after several respectable tenants, whom the extortion of Mr Titmouse and his agents had driven from their farms, with a view of restoring them, in lieu of their questionable successors. Having thus set everything in train for a

restoration to the former happy and contented state of things which prevailed at Yatton, before the usurpation of Mr Titmouse, Lord Drelincourt returned to town; but first left a hundred pounds in Dr Tatham's hands, to be distributed as he thought proper amongst the poorer villagers and neighbours on Christmas-eve; and also insisted on the Doctor's acceptance, himself, of fifty pounds in advance, on account of his salary, a hundred a-year, as chaplain to Lord Drelincourt; which appointment the Doctor received from his lordship's own hands, and with not a little delight and pride. His lordship, moreover, desired Mr Parkinson to hold him responsible for any little demand which might be due from the poor Doctor, in respect of the litigation in which he had been so shamefully involved; and thus Dr Tatham was made a free man again, with no further question about his right to tithes, or that interruption of the sources of his little income, to which he had lately been subjected; and with fifty pounds, moreover, as we have seen, at his absolute disposal. The Doctor made his appearance on Christmas-day in a very fine suit of black, new hat and all, and had a large attendance at church, and, moreover, a more attentive one than he had seen since the old times!

CHAPTER V.

MUDFLINT, WOODLOUSE, AND BLOODSUCK IN A BAD WAY; AND SIR HARKAWAY'S AWKWARD POSITION.

A DAY or two after Lord Drelincourt's return to town, Messrs Mudflint and Bloodsuck received a pressing invitation to York Castle, whose hospitable owners, as in the case of Mr Yahoo, would receive no refusal. In plain

English, they were both taken in execution on the same day, by virtue of two writs of *capias ad satisfaciendum*, for the damages and costs due to Mr Wigley—viz. £2960, 16s. 4d. from Smirk Mudflint, and £2760, 19s. from

Barnabas Bloodsuck, junior. Poor Mr Mudflint! In vain—in vain had been his Sunday evening's lectures for the last three months, on the errors pervading all systems of jurisprudence which annexed any pecuniary liabilities to political offences, instead of leaving the evil to be redressed by the spontaneous good sense of society. A single tap of the sheriff's officer on the eloquent lecturer's shoulder, upset all his fine speculations; just as Corporal Trim said, that one shove of the bayonet was worth all Dr Slop's fine metaphysical discourses upon the art of war!

In the next *Yorkshire Stingo*, which, alas! between ourselves, was on its last legs, there appeared one of, I must own, the most magnificent articles of the kind that I ever read, upon the atrocious and unparalleled outrage on the liberties of the subject, which had been committed in the incarceration of the two patriots—the martyr-patriots—Mudflint and Bloodsuck. 'On that day,' it impressively said, 'the sun of liberty had set on England for ever—in fact, for it was a time for speaking out—it had gone down in blood. The enlightened patriot, Mudflint, had at length fallen before the combined forces of bigotry and tyranny which were now, in the shape of the Church of England and the aristocracy, riding rough-shod over the necks of Englishmen. In his person lay prostrate the sacred rights of conscience, and the inalienable liberty of Englishmen. He had stood forth, nobly foremost, in the fray between the people and their oppressors; and he had fallen!—but he felt how *dulce et decorum* it was *pro patriâ mori!* He felt prouder and happier in his bonds than could ever feel the splendid fiend at F—m, in all his blood-stained magnificence!' It then 'called upon the people,' in vivid and spirit-stirring language, 'to rise against their tyrants like one man, and the days of their oppressors were numbered; and stated that the first blow was already struck against the black and monstrous fabric of priestcraft and tyranny; for that a SUBSCRIPTION had been already

opened on behalf of Mr Mudflint and Mr Bloodsuck, for the purpose of discharging the amount of debt and costs for which they had been so infamously deprived of their liberty. An unprecedented sensation had—it seemed—been already excited; and a reference to the advertising columns of their paper would show that the work went bravely on. The friends of religious and civil liberty all over the country were roused; they had but to continue their exertions, and the majesty of the people would be heard in a voice of thunder.' This article produced an immense sensation in that part of York Castle where the patriots were confined, and in the immediate neighbourhood of the office of the *Yorkshire Stingo*, (in fact, it had emanated from the masterly pen of Mudflint himself). Sure enough, on referring to the advertising columns of the *Stingo*, the following did appear fully to warrant the tone of indignant exultation indulged in by the editor:—

"Subscriptions already received (through C. Woodlouse) towards raising a fund for the liberation of the Reverend Smirk Mudflint and Barnabas Bloodsuck, junior, Esq., at present confined in York Castle.

An ardent admirer of the talents and character of the Roverend

Smirk Mudflint,	.	£200	0	0
Several friends of the Rev. S. M.	.	150	0	0
Anonymous,	.	100	0	0
John Brown, Esq.,	.	50	0	0
James Smith, Esq.,	.	50	0	0
John Jones, Esq.,	.	50	0	0
Sir Harkaway Rotgut Wildfire, Bart.,	.	50	0	0

Bart., 50 0 0"

Now, to conceal nothing from the reader, I regret being obliged to inform him that, with the exception of Sir H. R. Wildfire, Bart., the above noble-spirited individuals, whom no one had ever heard of in or near to Grilston, or, in fact, anywhere else, had their local habitation and their name only in the fertile brain of the Rev. Mr Mudflint, who had hit upon this device as an effectual one for *getting up the steam*, (to use a modern and significant expression), and giving that mighty impulse which was requisite to burst the bonds of the two imprisoned patriots.

Sir Harkaway's name was in the

list, to be sure, but that was on the distinct understanding that he was not to be called on to *pay* one farthing; the bargain being, that if he would give the sanction of his name to Messrs Mudflint and Bloodsuck, they would allow him to have the credit, *gratis*, of so nobly supporting the Liberal cause.

The following, however, were real and *bonâ fide* names and subscriptions collected, with immense exertion, during the ensuing three weeks; and though, when annexed to the foregoing flourishing commencement of the list, they give it, I must own, a somewhat tadpole appearance, yet here they are:—

“Subscriptions already received,	£	650	0	0
Cephas Woodlouse, Esq.,	.	1	1	0
Barnabas Bloodsuck, Esq., senior,	1	1	0	
Gargle Glister, Esq.,	.	0	10	0
Going Gooe, Esq.,	.	0	7	0
Simon Suoos, Esq.,	.	0	5	0
‘Tyrants, beware!!!’	.	0	2	6
‘One who is ready to ascend the scaffold, if required,’	.	0	2	0
‘Behemoth,’	.	0	1	6
‘A foe to priestcraft,’	.	0	1	0
‘Britons NEVER shall be slaves !’	0	0	9	
‘Down with the aristocracy,’	.	0	0	6
‘Free inquiry,’	.	0	0	4
‘Brutus and Cassius,’	.	0	0	4
‘Virtue in prison, better than vice in a castle,’	.	0	0	3
‘Defiance !’	.	0	0	2
Small sums,	.	0	0	1 <i>½</i>

Making a grand total of sums actually received by the editor of the *Yorkshire Stingo*, of £3 13 5*½*

there no honour among thieves? But, to come to the point, it fell out in this wise. Patriots must live, even in prison; and Mr Mudflint, being sorely pressed, wrote a letter to his “Dear Woodlouse,” asking for the amount of subscriptions received up to that date. He received, in return, a cordial note, addressed “My dear Mudflint,” full of civilities and friendly anxieties—hoping the air of the Castle agreed with him—assuring him how he was missed from the Liberal circle, and that he would be welcomed with open arms if ever he got out—and—enclosing a nicely drawn out debtor and creditor account !! headed—

“The Rev. Smirk Mudflint and Barnabas Bloodsuck, Esq., in account with Cephas Woodlouse,” in which every farthing of the above sum of £3, 13s. 5*½*d. was faithfully set down to the credit side, to be sure; but, alas!—on the DEBIT side stood the following truly disgusting items:—

“To Advertising lists of subsci-	ptions in Y. S. (three weeks),	£	3	15	6
To Circulars, Hand-bills, &c. (as per order),	.	:	2	13	9
Postage and Sundries,	.	:	0	4	3
					£6 13 6
By cash, amount of Subscri-	.	.	3	13	5 <i>½</i>
Balance due to C. W.,	.	.	£	3	0 0 <i>½</i>

On perusing the above document, so pregnant with perfidy and extortion, Mr Mudflint put it into his pocket, and, slipping off to his sleeping-room, closed the door, took off his garters, and, with deadly intentions towards himself, was tying them together, casting a ghastly glance, occasionally, at a great hook in the wall, which he could just reach by standing on a stool—when he was discovered, and removed, with his hands fastened behind him, to the strong room, where he was firmly attached to a heavy wooden bench, and left to his meditations. Solitude and reflection restored the afflicted captive to something like composure and resignation; and after meditating long and deeply on the selfishness of worldly friendships, the hollowness of political sympathy, and the infamous ingrati-

Certainly this was “not as good as had been anticipated”—as the editor subsequently owned in his leading article—and asked, with sorrowful indignation, how the people could expect any one to be true to them if they were not true to themselves! “Our cheeks,” said he, “tingle with shame on looking at the paltry list of additional contributions—‘Oh, lame and impotent conclusion’ to so auspicious a commencement!” — This was very fine indeed. It came well from Mr Woodlouse in his *editorial* capacity; but Mr Woodlouse, in his capacity as a man of business, was a different person. Alas! that it should fall to my lot to inquire, in my turn, with sorrowful indignation — was

tude of society to those who would regenerate it, his thoughts gradually turned towards a *better place*—a haven of rest—viz. the Insolvent Debtors' Court.

The effect of this infamous treatment upon his fellow-captive, Bloodsuck, was quite different. Having sworn one single prodigious oath, he enclosed the above account, and sent it off to his father, in the following pithy letter:—

"YORK CASTLE, 29th Dec. 18—.

"DEAR FATHER,—Read the enclosed! and then sell up Woodlouse.—Your dutiful Son,

"B. BLOODSUCK, Jun."

The old gentleman, on reading this laconic epistle, and its enclosure, immediately issued execution against Woodlouse, on a cognovit of his for £150, which he had given to the firm of Bloodsuck and Son for the balance of a bill of theirs for defending him unsuccessfully against an action for an infamous libel. Nobody would bid anything for his moribund "*Stingo*"; he had no other effects; and was immediately taken in execution, and sent to York Castle, where he, Bloodsuck, and Mudflint, whenever they met, could hardly be restrained from tearing one another's eyes out.

'Tis thus that reptiles of this sort prey upon each other!—To "begin nothing of which you have not well considered the end," is a saying, the propriety of which every one recognises when he hears it enunciated, but no one thinks of, in the hurry of actual life; and what follows will illustrate the truth of my reflection. It seemed, at first sight, a capital notion of Mudflint's, to send forth such a splendid list of sham subscribers, and it was natural enough for Mr Bloodsuck to assent to it, and Mr Woodlouse to become the party to it which he did—but who could have foreseen the consequences? A quarrel among rogues is almost always attended with ugly and unexpected consequences to themselves. Now, here was a mortal feud between Mr Woodlouse on the one side, and Messrs Mudflint and

Bloodsuck on the other; and in due time they all applied, as a matter of course, for relief under the Insolvent Debtor's Act. Before they got to the question concerning the nature of the debt—viz. the penalties in an action for the odious offence of bribery—in the case of Mr Mudflint, he had to encounter a serious and truly unexpected obstacle—viz. he had given in, with the minutest accuracy, the items of the above-mentioned subscription, amounting to £3, 13s. 5*½*d., but had observed a mysterious, and, as he might have supposed, politic silence, concerning the greater sum of £650; and which had been brought under the notice of the creditors of Messrs Mudflint and Bloodsuck, by Mr Woodlouse. On the newspaper acknowledging the receipt of that large sum being produced in court, Mr Mudflint made light of the affair; simply smiling, and shrugging his shoulders; but when Mr Woodlouse was called as a witness, you may guess the consternation of Mr Mudflint, on hearing him swear, that he had certainly never himself received the money, but had no doubt of Mr Mudflint having done so!—which, in fact, had always been his impression! for that when Mr Mudflint had furnished him with the list, which he handed up to the court, in Mudflint's handwriting, he inserted it in his paper as a matter of course—taking it to be a *bonâ fide* and matter-of-fact transaction.

The evident consternation of Mudflint hereat, satisfied all who heard him of his villainy, and the truth and honesty of Woodlouse, who stuck to this new version of the affair, manfully. But this opened quite a new view of his position to Mr Bloodsuck; who, on finding that he must needs adopt either Mudflint's or Woodlouse's account of the matter, began to reflect upon the disagreeable effect it would have, thereafter, upon the connection and character of the respectable firm of Bloodsuck and Son, for him to appear to have been a party to such a shocking fraud upon the public, as a sham list of subscribers, and to so

large an amount. He therefore swore stoutly that he, too, had always been under the impression that Mr Mudflint had received the £650 ! and much regretted to find that that gentleman must have been appropriating so large a sum to himself, instead of being now ready to divide it between their respective creditors. This tallied with Woodlouse's account ; and infinitely disgusted was that gentleman at finding himself so cleverly outwitted by Bloodsuck. On this Mudflint turned with fury upon Bloodsuck, and he upon Mudflint, who abused Woodlouse ; and eventually the commissioners, unable to believe any of them, remanded them all, as a pack of rogues, till the next court day ; addressing a stern warning to Mr Mudflint, concerning the serious consequences of his persisting in fraudulently concealing his property from his creditors. By the time of his being next brought up, the persecuted Mudflint had bethought himself of a bold mode of corroborating the truth of his explanation of that accursed first list of subscribers—viz. summoning Sir Harkaway Rotgut Wildfire as a witness in his behalf ; whom he confidently asked whether, for all his name appeared in the subscription list, he had really ever given, in point of fact, one farthing of the £50 there mentioned ?

Now, had our friend Mudflint been a long-headed man, he would not have taken this step ; for Sir Harkaway could never be supposed capable of bringing himself to admit that he had been a party to such a dirty deceit upon the public as he was now charged with. On a careful consideration of the circumstances, therefore, Sir Harkaway, having an eye solely to his own credit, first said, with a somewhat haughty, but at the same time embarrassed air, that he was not in the habit of allowing his name to appear in such lists without his having actually paid the sum named ; then, on being pressed, he swore that he thought he must have paid it ; then, that he had very little doubt on the subject ; then, that he had no doubt on the matter at all ; then, that he knew

that in point of fact he had advanced the money : and finally, that he then recollects all the circumstances most distinctly ! — On this complete confirmation of the roguery of Mudflint, he was instantly reprimanded severely, and remanded indefinitely ; the whole court believing that he had appropriated to his own use every farthing of the £650, defrauding even his fellow-prisoner, Mr Bloodsuck. It was a good while before Mudflint recovered from the effects of this astounding conduct of Sir Harkaway. When his wits had returned, he felt certain that, somewhere or other, he had a letter from Sir Harkaway which would satisfy everybody of the peculiarly unpleasant position in which the worthy but oblivious baronet had placed himself. And sure enough, on desiring his wife to institute a rigorous search among his papers, she succeeded in discovering the following remarkable document, which she at once forwarded to her disconsolate husband :—

“VIEW-HALLO HALL, 27th Dec. 18—.

“SIR,—I have a considerable regard for your services to liberty, (civil and religious), and am willing to serve you in the way you wish. You may put me down, therefore, in the list for anything you please, as my name carries weight in the county—but, of course, you know better than to kill your decoy duck.

“Sir, your obedient servant,

“H. R. WILDFIRE.

“THE REV. S. MUDFLINT, &c. &c.”

This unfortunate letter, in the first frenzy of his rage and exultation, Mudflint instantly forwarded, with a statement of facts, to the editor of the *True Blue* newspaper, which carried it into every corner of the county on the very next morning ; and undoubtedly gave thereby a heavy blow, and a great discouragement, to the Liberal cause, all over Yorkshire ; for Sir Harkaway had always been looked upon as one of its staunchest supporters.

Shortly after Messrs Mudflint and Bloodsuck had gone to pay this, their long-expected visit, to the governor of

York Castle, Mr Parkinson required possession of the residence of each of them, in Yatton, to be delivered up to him, on behalf of Lord Drelinconrr, allowing a week's time for the removal of the few effects of each ; after which period had elapsed, the premises in question were completely cleared of everything belonging to their late odious occupants—who, in all human probability, would, infinitely to the delight of Dr Tatham and all the better sort of the inhabitants, never again be there seen or heard of. In a similar manner another crying nuisance, viz. the public-house known by the name of The Toper's Arms, was got rid of; it having been resolved upon by Lord Drelincourt that there should be thenceforth but one in Yatton—viz. the quiet, old, original Aubrey Arms, which was quite sufficient for the moderate purposes of the inhabitants. Two or three other persons who had crept into the village during the Titmouse dynasty were just as summarily dealt with, to the great satisfaction of those left behind ; and by Christmas-day the village was beginning to show signs of a return to its former happy and quiet condition. The works going on at the Hall gave an air of cheerful bustle and animation to the whole neighbourhood, and afforded extensive employment at a season of the year when it was most wanted. The chapel and residence of the Rev. Mr Mudflint, underwent a rapid and remarkable alteration. The fact was, that Mr Delamere had conceived the idea, which, with Lord Drelincourt's consent, he proceeded to carry immediately into execution, of pulling them down, raising in their stead a school, filling it with scholars, and providing a matron for it, by way of giving a pleasant surprise to Kate, on her return to Yatton. He engaged a well-known architect, who submitted to him the plan of a charming little Gothic structure, adapted for receiving some twenty or thirty girls, and also affording a permanent residence for the mistress. The scheme being heartily approved of by Mr Delamere, and Dr Tatham, whom he had taken into his counsels

in the affair, they exacted a pledge that the building should be completed and fit for occupation within three months' time. There was to be, in the front, a small and tasteful tablet, bearing the inscription—

**C. A.
Fundatrix.**

18—.

The mistress of Kate's former school, gladly relinquished a similar situation which she held in another part of the county, in order to resume her functions at Yatton ; and Dr Tatham was, in the first instance, to select the scholars, who were to be clothed at Delamere's expense, in the former neat and simple attire which had been adopted by Miss Aubrey. How he delighted to think of the surprise which he was thus preparing for his lovely mistress, and by which, at the same time, he was securing for her a permanent and interesting memento in the neighbourhood !

About this time there came a general election ; the nation being thoroughly disgusted with the character and conduct of a great number of those who had, in the direful hubbub of the last election, contrived to creep into the House of Commons for all sorts of unworthy and sinister purposes. Public affairs were, moreover, getting daily into a more deranged and dangerous condition : in fact, the Ministers might have been compared to a parcel of little mischievous and venturesome boys, who had found their way into vast complicated steam machiinery, and set it into a fearful motion, which they could neither understand nor govern ; and from which they were only too glad to escape safely, if possible, and make way for those whose proper business it was to attend to it. All I have to do, however, at present, with that important political movement, is to state its effect upon the representation of the borough of Yatton. Its late member, Mr Tittlebat Titmouse, it completely annihilated. Of course, he made no attempt to stand again ; nor, in fact, did any one in the same inte-

rest. The *Yorkshire Stingo*, in its very last number, of which fifteen only were sold, tried desperately to get up a contest, but in vain. Mr Going Gone, and even Mr Glister, were quite willing to have stood—but, in the first place, neither could raise money enough to pay his share of the expenses of erecting the hustings; and, secondly, there were insurmountable difficulties in the way of either of them procuring even a *pseudo* qualification. The more sensible of even the strong Liberal electors had, moreover, become alive to the exquisite absurdity of returning such creatures as Titmouse, or any one of his class, as parliamentary representatives of a free and enlightened community. Then the Quaint Club had ceased to exist, partly through the change of political feeling which

was rapidly going on in the borough, and partly through terror of the consequences of bribery, of which the miserable fate of Mudflint and Blood-suck was a fearful instance. In fact, the disasters which had befallen those gentlemen, and Mr Titmouse, had completely paralysed and crushed the so-called Liberal party at Yatton, and disabled it from ever attempting to contend against the paramount and legitimate influence of Lord Drelin-court. The result of all this was, the return, without a contest, of the Honorable Geoffry Lovel Delamere as the representative of the borough of Yatton in the new Parliament: an event which he penned his first frank* in communicating to a certain young lady then in London.

* See APPENDIX.

CHAPTER VI.

MR TITMOUSE ON HIS LAST LEGS.

NOTHING, doubtless, could be more delightful for Mr Delamere than his easy transit to St Stephen's; but in what a direful predicament did the loss of his seat place the late member, Mr Titmouse! Let us consider it for a moment. Mr Flummery's promise of a "place" had vanished, of course, into thin air—having answered its purpose of securing Mr Titmouse's vote, up to the moment of the dissolution; an event which Mr Flummery feared would tend to deprive himself of the honour of serving his country in any official capacity for some twenty years to come—if he should so long be permitted to live at home, and the country so long survive his exclusion from office. Foiled miserably in this quarter, Mr Titmouse applied himself with redoubled energy to render available his other resources, and made repeated and impassioned applications to Mr O'Gibbet—who never

took the slightest notice of any of them: considering, as he conceived justly, that Mr Titmouse was no more entitled to receive back, than he had originally been to lend, the £500 in question. As for Mr O'Doodle and Mr M'Squash—they, like himself, were thrown out of Parliament; and no one upon earth seemed able to tell whither they had gone, or what had become of them, though there were a good many people who made it their business to inquire after them anxiously. That quarter, therefore, seemed at present hopeless. Then there was an Honourable youngster, who owed him a hundred pounds;—but he, the moment that he had lost his own election, caused it to be given out to any one interested in his welfare—and there suddenly appeared a great many such—that he was gone on a scientific expedition to the South Pole, from which he trusted, though he was not very

sanguine, that he should, one day, come back.

All these things drove Mr Titmouse nearly beside himself—and certainly his position was a little precarious. When Parliament was dissolved, he had in his pocket a couple of sovereigns, the residue of a five-pound note, out of which, *mirabile dictu*, he had succeeded in worrying Mr Flummery, on the evening of the last division; and these two sovereigns, a shirt or two, the articles actually on his person, and a copy of *Boariana*, were all his assets to meet liabilities of about a hundred thousand pounds; and the panoply of Parliamentary "privilege" was dropping off, as it were, hourly. In a few days' time, in fact, he would be at the mercy of a terrific host of creditors, who were waiting to spring upon his little carcass, like so many famished wolves. Every one of them had gone on with his action up to judgment for both debt and costs—and had his *Ca. Sa.* and *Fl. Fa.** ready for use, at an instant's notice. There were three of these injured gentlemen—the Jews, Israel Fang, Mordecai Gripe, and Mephibosheth Maharshalal-hash-baz—who had entered into a solemn vow with one another that they would never lose sight of Titmouse for one moment, by day or by night, whatever pains or expense it might cost them—until, the period of privilege having expired, they should be at liberty to plunge their talons into the body of their little debtor. There were, in fact, at least a hundred of his creditors ready to pounce upon him the instant that he should make the slightest attempt to quit the country. His lodgings consisted, at this time, of a miserable little garret at the back of a small house in Westminster, not far from the Houses of Parliament, and of the two, positively inferior to the room in Closet Court, Oxford Street, in which he was first presented to the reader. Here he would often lie in bed half the day, drinking weak, because he could not afford strong, brandy-and-water, and endeavouring to consider "what the

devil" he had done with the immense sums of money which had been at his disposal; how he would act, if by some lucky chance he should again become wealthy; and, in short, "what the plague was now to become of him." What was he to do? Whither should he go?—To sea?—Then it must be as a common sailor—if any one would now take him! Or suppose he were to enlist? 'Glorious war, and all that,' *et cetera*—he thought of. But when he reflected that his accursed diminutive stature would prevent his enlisting into the Guards, the glittering helmet and accoutrements of which were very attractive to his imagination, and consequently that he had nothing for it but to creep into some stunted undergrown regiment of the line—he abandoned all idea of the army!—Both these schemes, however, pre-supposed his being able to escape from his creditors, who, he had a vehement suspicion, were on the look-out for him in all directions. Every review that he thus took of his hopeless position and prospects, ended in a fiendish degree of abhorrence of his parents, whose fault alone it was, in having brought him into the world, that he had been thus turned out of a splendid estate of ten thousand a-year, and made worse than a beggar. He would sometimes spring out of bed, convulsively clutching his hands together, and wishing himself beside their grave, to tear them out of it. He thought of Mr Quirk, Mr Snap, and Mr Tag-rag, with fury; but whenever he adverted to Mr Gammon, he shuddered, as if in the presence of a baleful spectre. For all this, he preserved the same impudent strut and swagger in the street which had ever distinguished him. Every day of his life he walked towards the scenes of his recent splendour, which seemed to attract him irresistibly. He would pass the late Earl of Dredlington's house, in Grosvenor Square, staring at it, and the hatchment suspended in front of it. Then he would wander on to Park Lane, and gaze with unutterable feelings—poor little wretch!—at the house which once had been his and Lady Cecilia's, but was

* See APPENDIX.

then occupied by a nobleman, whose tasteful equipage and servants were often standing before the door. He would, on some of those occasions, feel as though he should like to drop down dead, and be out of all his misery.

If ever he met and nodded, or spoke to those with whom he had till recently been on the most familiar terms, he was encountered by a steady stare, and sometimes a smile, which withered his little heart within him, and made the last three years of his life appear to have been but a dream. The slight dinner that he ate, for he had almost entirely lost his appetite, through long addiction to drinking, was in a small tavern, at only a few doors' distance from his lodgings, and where he generally spent his evenings, for want of any other place to go to. There he formed, at length, a sort of intimacy with a good-natured and respectable gentleman, who came nearly as often thither as Titmouse himself, and would sit conversing with him pleasantly over his cigar, and glass of spirits and water. The oftener Titmouse saw him, the more he liked him; and finally, taking him entirely into his confidence, unbosomed himself concerning his unhappy present circumstances, and still mere unhappy prospects. This man was a brother of Mahar-shalabash-baz the Jew, and a sheriff's-officer! keeping vulture watch upon his movements, night and day, alternately with another who had not attracted Titmouse's notice. After having canvassed several modes of disposing of himself, none of which were satisfactory to either Titmouse or his friend, he hinted that he was aware that there were lots of the enemy on the look-out for him, and who would be glad to get at him; but he knew, he said, that he was as safe as in a castle for some time yet to come; and he also mentioned a scheme which had occurred to him—but this was all in the strictest confidence—viz. to write to Lord Drelin-court, (who was, after all, his relation of some sort or other, and ought to be devilish glad to get into all his, Titmouse's, property so easily), and ask him for some situation under govern-

ment, either in France, India, or America, and give him a trifle to set him up at starting, and help him to “nick the bums!” His friend listened attentively; protested that he thought it an excellent idea, and Mr Titmouse had better write the letter and take it at once. Upon this Titmouse called for pen, ink, and paper; and while his friend leaned back calmly smoking his cigar, and sipping his gin-and-water, poor Titmouse wrote the following epistle to Lord Drelin-court—the very last which I shall be able to lay before the reader:—

“To the Right Hon.
LORD DRELINCOURT, My Lord—

“Natrally situated In The Way
which I Am With yr lordship Most
Unpleasantly Addresing you On A
Matter of that Nature most Painful
To My feelings Considering My sur-
prising Forlorn Condition, And So
Sudden Which Who c^d Have A Little
While Ago suppos'd. Y^r Lordship
(of Course) Is Aware That There Is
No fault of Mine, But rather My Cursed
Parents w^h Ought To be Ashamed of
Themselves For Their Improper Con-
duct w^h Was never made Acquainted
with till Lately with Great Greif.
Alas. I Only Wish I Had Never Been
Born, or Was Dead and Cumfortable
in an Erly Grave. I Humbly, My
Lord, Endeavoured To Do My Duty
when In the Upper Circles and Espe-
cially to the People, which I Always
voted for, *Steady*, in The House, And
Never Injured Any One, Much less
you, My Lord, if You Will Believe Me,
For I surely w^d. Not Have Come
Upon You In the Way I did My
Lord But Was obliged, And Regret,
&c. I Am Most Truly Miserable,
Being (Betwixt You and Me, my Lord)
over Head and Years in debt, And
Have Nothing To pay With and out
of *The House* So Have No Protection
and Fear am Going Very Fast To ye.
Dogs, my Lord, Swindle O'Gibbett,
Esq. M.P. Owes me £500 (borrowed
Money) and Will not Pay and is a
Shocking Scamp, but (depend upon
it) I will stick To Him Like a Leach.
Of Course Now your Lordship Is Got

into y^e Estate &c. you Will Have y^e Rents, &c., but Is Not *Half The Last Quarter* Mine Seeing I Was in possession wh^{ch} is 9-10ths of y^e law. But gave it All Up To you willingly Now For what can't Be cur'd, Must Be Indur'd can y^r lordship Get me *Some Foreign Appointment Abroad* wh shd be much obliged for and Would Get Me out of the Way of Troubling yr lordship about the Rents wh freely give Up. You Being Got To *that High Rank* wh was to Have Been mine can do What You please doubtless. Am Sorry To Say I am Most Uncommon Hard Up Since I Have Broke up. And am nearly Run Out. Consider my Lord How Easy I Let Yon Win y^e Property. When might Have Given Your Lordship Trouble. If you will Remember this And Be So obliging to *Lend me* a £10 note (for y^e Present) Will much oblige

"Your Lordship's to Command,
Most obedt"

"TITTLEBAT TITMOUSE.

"P.S.—I Leave This with my Own Hand That you May be Sure and get it. Remember me to Miss A. and Lady D."

Mr Titmouse contented himself with telling his new friend merely the substance of the above epistle, and, having sealed it up, asked him if he were disposed for a walk to the West End; and on being answered in the affirmative, they both set off for Lord Drelincourt's house in Dover Street. When they had reached it, his friend stepped to a little distance: while Titmouse, endeavouring to assume a confident air, hemmed, twitched up his shirt-collar, and knocked and rang with all the boldness of a gentleman coming to dinner. Open flew the door, in a moment; and—

"My Lord Drelincourt's—isn't it?" inquired Titmouse, holding his letter in his hand, and tapping his ebony cane pretty loudly against his legs.

"Of course it is! What d'ye want?" quoth the porter sternly, enraged at being disturbed, at such an hour, by such a puppy of a fellow as then stood before him—for the bloom was off the

finesse of Titmouse; and who that knew the world would call, and with such a knock, at seven o'clock, with a letter? Titmouse would have answered the fellow pretty sharply, but was afraid of endangering the success of his application: so, with considerable calmness, he replied—

"Oh—Then have the goodness to deliver this into his lordship's own hand—it's of great importance."

"Very well," said the porter stiffly, not dreaming what a remarkable personage was the individual whom he was addressing, and the next instant shut the door.

"Dem impudent blackguard!" said he, as he rejoined his friend—his heart almost bursting with mortification and fury; I've a great mind to call tomorrow, 'pon my soul—and get him discharged!"

He had dated his letter from his lodgings, where, about ten o'clock, on the ensuing morning, a gentleman, in fact, Lord Drelincourt's man of business, called; and asking to see Mr Titmouse, gave into his hands a letter, of which the following is a copy:—

"DOVER STREET, Wednesday Morning.

"Lord Drelincourt, in answer to Mr Titmouse's letter, requests his acceptance of the enclosed Bank of England Note for Ten Pounds.

"Lord D. wishes Mr Titmouse to furnish him with an address, to which any further communications on the part of Lord D. may be addressed."

On repairing to the adjoining tavern, soon after receiving the above welcome note, Mr Titmouse fortunately (!) fell in with his friend, and, with somewhat of an air of easy triumph showed him Lord Drelincourt's note, and its enclosure. Some time afterwards, having smoked each a couple of cigars and drank a couple of tumblers of brandy-and-water, Mr Titmouse's companion got very confidential; and it being the last day of Titmouse's privilege from arrest, in a low whisper said, that he had been thinking over Mr Titmouse's case ever since they were talking together the

night before ; and for five pounds would put him in the way of escaping all danger immediately, provided no questions were asked by Mr Titmouse ; for he, the speaker, was running a great risk in what he was doing. Titmouse placed his hand over his heart, exclaiming, " Honour — honour ! " and having called for change from the landlord, gave a five-pound note into the hand of his companion, who therupon, in a mysterious under tone, told him that by ten o'clock the next morning he would have a hackney-coach at the door of his lodgings, and would at once convey him safely to a vessel then in the river, and bound for the south of France ; where Mr Titmouse might remain till he had in some measure settled his affairs with his creditors.

Sure enough, at the appointed time, the promised vehicle drew up at the door of the house where Titmouse lodged ; and within a few moments' time he came down stairs with a small portmanteau, and entered the coach where sat his friend, evidently not wishing to be recognised or seen by anybody passing. They talked together earnestly and eagerly as they journeyed in the direction of the Borough, and just as they arrived opposite a huge dismal-looking building, with immensely high walls, the coach stopped. Three or four persons were standing, as if they had been in expectation of an arrival ; and, requesting Mr Titmouse to alight for a moment, his friend opened the coach door from within, and let down the steps. The moment that poor Titmouse had got out, he was surrounded and seized by those who were standing by ; his perfidious " friend " had disappeared ; and almost petrified with amazement and fright, and taken quite off his guard by the suddenness of the movement, he was hurried through the court-yard and doorway of the King's Bench Prison, the three Jews following close at his heels, and conducted into a gloomy room, where he seemed first to awake to the horrors of his situation, and went into a paroxysm of despair and fury. He

sprang madly towards the door, and on being repulsed by those standing beside him, stamped violently about the room, shouting, " Murder, murder ! thieves ! " Then he pulled his hair, shook his head with frantic vehemence, and presently sank into a seat, from which, after a few moments, he sprang wildly, and broke his cane into a number of pieces, scattering them about the room like a madman. Then he cried passionately ; more, in fact, like a frantic school-girl, than a man ; and struck his head violently with his fists. All this while the three Jews were looking on with a grin of devilish gratification at the little wretch's agony. His frenzy lasted so long, that he was removed to a strong room, and threatened with being put into a strait-waistcoat if he continued to conduct himself so outrageously.

The fact of his being thus safely housed, soon became known ; and within a day or two's time, the miserable little fellow was completely overwhelmed by the attentions of his creditors ; who, absurd and unavailing as were their proceedings, came rushing down upon him, one after another, with as breathless an impetuosity as if they had thought him a mass of solid gold, which was to become the spoil of him who could first seize it. The next day his fate was announced to the world by paragraphs in all the morning newspapers, which informed their readers that " yesterday Mr Titmouse, late M.P. for Yatton, was secured by a skilful stratagem, just as he was on the point of quitting this country for America, and lodged in the King's Bench Prison, at the suit of three creditors, to the extent of upwards of sixty thousand pounds. It is understood that his debts considerably exceed the sum of one hundred and fifty thousand pounds." As soon as he had become calm enough to do so—viz. three or four days after his incarceration—he wrote a long, dismal epistle to Lord Drelincourt, and also one to Miss Aubrey, passionately reminding them both that he was, after all, of the same blood with themselves, only luck had gone for them and

against him, and therefore he hoped they would "remember him, and do something to get him out of his trouble." He seemed to cling to them as though he had a claim upon them—instead of being himself Lord Drelin-court's debtor to the amount of, *at least*, twenty thousand pounds, had his lordship, instead of inclining a compassionate ear to his entreaties, chosen to fling his heavy claim, too, into the scale against him. This, however, was a view of the case which never occurred to poor Titmouse. Partly of their own accord, and partly at Miss Aubrey's earnest entreaty, Lord Drelin-court and Mr Delamere went to the prison, and had a long interview with him—his lordship being specially anxious to ascertain, if possible, whether Titmouse had been originally privy to the monstrous fraud, by means of which he had succeeded in possessing himself of Yatton, at so fearful a cost of suffering to those whom he had deprived of it. While he was chattering away, more after the fashion of a newly-caged ape, than a MAN, with eager and impassioned tone and gesticulation—with a profuse usage of his favourite phraseology—" 'Pon my soul!' " " 'Pon my life!' " "By Jove!" and of several shocking oaths, for which he was repeatedly and sternly rebuked by Lord Drelin-court, with what profound and melancholy interest did the latter regard the strange being before him, and think of the innumerable extraordinary things which he had heard concerning him! Here was the widowed husband of the Lady Cecilia, and son-in-law of the Earl of Dreddlington—that broken pillar of pride!—broken, alas! in the very moment of imaginary strength and magnificence! Here was the late member of Parliament for the borough of Yatton, whose constituency had deliberately declared him possessed of their complete confidence!—on whose individual vote had more than once depended the existence of the King's ministry, and the passing of measures of the greatest possible magnitude! This was he whom all society—even the most brilliant—had courted as a

great lion.—This was the sometime owner of Yatton! who had aspired to the hand of Miss Aubrey! who had for two years revelled in every conceivable species of luxury, splendour, and profligacy! Here was the individual at whose instance—at whose nod—Lord Drelin-court had been deprived of his liberty, ruthlessly torn from the bleeding bosom of his family, and he and they, for many many weary months, subjected to the most harassing and heart-breaking privations and distresses!

On quitting him, Lord Drelin-court put into his hand a ten-pound note, with which Titmouse seemed, though he dared not say so, not a little disappointed. His lordship and Mr Delamere were inclined, upon the whole, for Titmouse had displayed some little cunning, to believe that he had not been aware of his illegitimacy till the issue of the Ecclesiastical proceedings had been published; but from many remarks he let fall, they were satisfied that Mr Gammon must have known the fact from a very early period—for Titmouse spoke freely of the constant mysterious threats he was in the habit of receiving from that gentleman. Lord Drelin-court had promised Titmouse to consider in what way he could serve him; and during the course of the day instructed Mr Runnington to put the case into the hands of some attorney of the Insolvent Debtor's Court, with a view of endeavouring to obtain for the unfortunate little being the "*benefit of the Act.*" As soon as the course of practice would admit of it, he was brought up in the ordinary way before the court, which was quite crowded by persons either interested as creditors, or curious to see so celebrated a person as TITTLEBAT TITMOUSE. The commissioners were astounded at the sight of the number and magnitude of his liabilities—a hundred thousand pounds at least!—against which he had nothing to set except the following items:—

" Cssh lent Swindle O'Gibbet, Esq., M.P.,	£500
Do. do. Phelim O'Doodle,	200
Do. do. Micah M'Squash,	100
Honble. Empty Belly,	100"

—together with some other similar but lesser sunis; but for none of them could he produce any vouchers, except for the sum lent to the Hon. Empty Belly, who had been imprudent enough to give him his I.O.U. Poor Titmouse's discharge was vehemently opposed on the part of his creditors, particularly the three Jews; whose frantic and indecorous conduct in open court, occasioned the chief commissioner to order them to be removed. They would have had Titmouse remanded to the day of his death! After several adjourned and lengthened hearings, the court pronounced him not to be entitled to his discharge till he should have remained in prison for the space of eighteen calendar months; on hearing which he burst into a fit of loud and bitter weeping, and was removed from court, wringing his hands and shaking his head in perfect despair. As soon as this result had been communicated to Lord Drelincourt, who had taken special care that his name should not be among those of Mr Titmouse's creditors, he came to the humane determination of allowing him a hundred and fifty pounds a-year for his life, payable weekly, to commence from the date of his being remanded to prison.—For the first month or so he spent all his weekly allowance in brandy-and-water, and cigars, within three days after receiving it. Then he took to gambling with his fellow-prisoners; but, all of a sudden, he turned over quite a new leaf. The fact was, that he had become intimate with an unfortunate literary hack, who used to procure small sums by writing articles for the meanest periodicals; and at his suggestion, Titmouse fell to work upon several quires of foolscap: the following being the title given to his projected work, by his new and experienced friend—

“ UPS AND DOWNS :
Being
MEMOIRS OF MY LIFE,
by
TITTLEBAT TITMOUSE, Esq.,
Late M.P. for Yatton.”

He got so far on with his task as to

fill three quires of paper; and it is a fact that a fashionable publisher got scent of the undertaking, came to the prison, and offered him three hundred pounds for his manuscript, provided only he would undertake that it should fill three volumes. This greatly stimulated Titmouse; but unfortunately he fell ill before he had completed the first volume, and never, during the remainder of his confinement, recovered himself sufficiently to proceed further with his labours. I once had an opportunity of glancing over what he had written, which was really curious, and might have been made entertaining; but I do not know what has since become of it.

During the last month of his imprisonment he became intimate with a villainous young Jew attorney, who, under the pretence of commencing proceedings in the House of Lords (!) for recovering the Yatton property once more from Lord Drelincourt, contrived to get into his own pockets more than one-half of the weekly sum allowed by that nobleman to his grateful pensioner! On the day of his discharge, Titmouse, not comprehending the nature of his own position, went off straight to the lodgings of Mr Swindle O'Gibbet, to demand payment of the five hundred pounds due to him from that honourable gentleman, to whom he became a source of inconceivable vexation and torment. Following him about with a sort of insane and miserable pertinacity, Titmouse lay in wait for him now at his lodgings—then at the door of the House of Commons; dogged him from the one point to the other; assailed him with passionate entreaties and reproaches in the open street; went to the public meetings over which Mr O'Gibbet presided, or where he spoke, always on behalf of the rights of conscience, and the liberty of the subject, and would call out—“Pay me my five hundred pounds! I want my money! Where's my five hundred pounds?” on which Mr O'Gibbet would point to him, call him an “impostor! a liar!” furiously adding that he was only hired by the

enemies of the people, to come and disturb their proceedings; whereupon Titmouse—surely a new way of paying old debts—was always shuffled about—his hat knocked over his eyes—and he was finally kicked out, and once or twice pushed down from the top to the bottom of the stairs. The last time that this happened, poor Titmouse's head struck with dreadful force against the banisters; and he lay for some time stunned and bleeding. On being carried to a doctor's shop, he was shortly afterwards seized with a fit of epilepsy. This seemed to have given the finishing stroke to his shattered intellects; for he sank soon afterwards into a state of idiocy. Through the kindness, and at the expense, of Lord Drelincourt, he was admitted an inmate of a private lunatic asylum, in the eastern suburbs of London, where he still continues. He is harmless and quiet; and after dress-

ing himself in the morning with extraordinary pains, never failing to have a glimpse visible of his white pocket-handkerchief out of the pocket in the breast of his surtout, nor to have his boots brightly polished, he generally sits down with a glass of strong and warm toast-and-water, and a coloured straw, which he imagines to be brandy-and-water, and a cigar. He complained, at first, that the brandy-and-water was very weak; but he is now reconciled to it, and sips his two tumblers daily with an air of tranquil enjoyment. When I last saw him he was thus occupied. On my approaching him, he hastily stuck his quizzing-glass into his eye, where it was retained by the force of muscular contraction, while he stared at me with all his former expression of rudeness and presumption. 'Twas at once a ridiculous, and a mournful sight.

CHAPTER VII.

MR TAG-RAG'S FINAL ADVENTURES; A SUDDEN GLIMPSE OF GAMMON AGAIN; AND THE LAST OF MR QUIRK.

I SHOULD be glad, if, consistently with my duty as an impartial historian, I could have concealed some discreditable features in the conduct of Mr Tag-rag, subsequently to his unfortunate bankruptcy. I shall not, however, dwell upon them at greater length than is necessary. His creditors were so much dissatisfied with his conduct, that not one of them could be prevailed upon to sign his certificate,* by which means he was prevented from re-establishing himself in business, even had he been able to find the means of so doing; since, in the whimsical eye of our law, any business carried on by an uncertificated

bankrupt, is so carried on by him only as a trustee for his creditors.—His temper getting more and more soured, he became at length quite intolerable to his wife, whom he had married only for her fortune, £800, and the goodwill of her late husband's business, as a retail draper and hosier, in Little Turn-stile, Holborn. When he found that Mrs Tag-rag would not forsake her unhappy daughter, he snapped his fingers at her, and, I regret to say, told her that she and her daughter, and her respectable husband, might all go to the devil together—but that he must shift for himself; and, in plain English, he took himself off! Mr Dismal Horror found that he had

* See APPENDIX.

made a sad business of it, in marrying Miss Tag-rag, who brought him two children in the first nineteen months, and seemed likely to go on at that rate for a long time to come, which made Mr Horror think seriously of treading in the steps of his excellent father-in-law—viz. deserting his wife. They had contrived to scrape together a petty day-school for young children, in Goswell Street; but which was inadequate to the support of themselves, and also of Mrs Tag-rag, who had failed in obtaining the situation of pew-opener to a neighbouring chapel. The scheme he had conceived, he soon afterwards carried into effect; for, whereas he went out one day, saying he should return in an hour's time, he nevertheless came not back at all. Burning with zeal to display his pulpit talents, he took to street-preaching, and at length succeeded in getting around him a group of hearers, many of them serious and attentive pick-pockets, with dexterous fingers and devout faces, wherever he held forth, which was principally in the neighbourhood of the Tower and Smithfield—till he was driven away by the police, who never interfered with his little farce till he had sent his hat round; when, to preserve the peace, they would rush in, disperse the crowd, and taking him into custody, convey him to the police-office; where, in spite of his eloquent defences, he several times got sentenced to three months' imprisonment, as an incorrigible disturber of the peace, and in league with the questionable characters, who—the police declared—were invariably members of every congregation he addressed. One occasion of his being thus taken into custody was rather a singular one:—Mr Tag-rag happened to be passing while he was holding forth, and, unable to control his fury, made his way immediately in front of the impassioned preacher; and, sticking his fists in his side a-kimbo, exclaimed, “Aren't you a nice young man now?”—which quite disconcerted his pious son-in-law; who threw his hymn-book in his father-in-law's face; which bred such a dis-

turbance that the police rushed in, and took them both off to the police-office, where such a scene ensued as beggars all description.

What has since become of Mr Horror, I do not know; but the next thing I heard of Mr Tag-rag, was his entering into the employ of no other a person than Mr Huckaback, who had been for some time settled in a little shop in the neighbourhood of Leicester Square. Having, however, inadvertently shown in to Mr Huckaback one of his creditors to whom he had given special orders to be denied, that gentleman instantly turned him out of the shop, in a fury, without character or wages; which latter, nevertheless, Tag-rag soon compelled him, by the process of the Court of Requests, to pay him; being one week's entire salary. In passing shortly afterwards a mock auction, on the left-hand side of the Poultry, I could not help pausing to admire the cool effrontery with which the Jew in the box was putting up showy but worthless articles to sale, to four patient puffers—his entire audience—and who bid against one another, in a business-like way, for everything thus proposed for their consideration. Guess my astonishment and concern, when one of the aforesaid puffers, who stood with his back towards me, happening to look round for a moment, I discovered in him my friend Mr Tag-rag! His hat was nicely brushed, but all the “*nap*” was off; his coat was clean, threadbare, and evidently had been made for some other person; under his arm was an old cotton umbrella; and in his hands, which were clasped behind him, were a pair of antiquated black gloves, doubled up, only for show, evidently not for use.

Notwithstanding, however, he had sunk thus low, there happened to him, some time afterwards, one or two surprising strokes of good fortune. First of all, he contrived to get a sum of three hundred pounds from one of his former debtors, who imagined that Tag-rag was authorised by his assignees to receive it. Nothing, however, of the kind; and Tag-rag quietly

opened a small shop in the neighbourhood of St George's in the East, and began to scrape together a tolerable business. Reading one day a flourishing speech in Parliament, on the atrocious enormity of calling upon Dissenters to pay Church-rates, it occurred to Mr Tag-rag as likely to turn out a good speculation, and greatly increase his business, if he were to become a martyr for conscience' sake ; and after turning the thing about a good deal in his mind, he determined on refusing to pay the sum of one shilling and twopence-halfpenny, due in respect of a rate which had been recently made for the repair of the church steeple, then nearly falling down. In a civil and unctuous manner, he announced to the collector his determination to refuse the payment on strictly conscientious grounds. The collector expostulated, but in vain. He urged the smallness of the sum ; but Tag-rag meekly spoke of a great principle. Then came the amazed churchwardens—but he was inflexible. The thing began to get wind, and the Rector, an amiable and learned man, and an earnest lover of peace in his parish, came to try his powers of persuasion ; but he might have saved himself the trouble ; 'twas impossible to divert Mr Tag-rag's eye from the glorious crown of martyrdom which he had resolved upon earning. Then he called on the minister of the congregation where he "worshipped," and with tears and agitation unhosomed himself upon the subject, and besought his counsel. The intelligent and pious pastor got excited ; so did his leading people. A meeting was called at his chapel, the result of which was a declaration that Mr Tag-rag's conduct was most praiseworthy and noble—that he had taken his stand upon a great principle—and deserved to be supported. Several leading members of the congregation, who had never dealt with him before, suddenly became customers of his.

The upshot of the matter was, that, after a prodigious stir, Mr Tag-rag became a victim in right earnest ; and was taken into custody by virtue of a

writ *De Contumace Capiendo*, amidst the indignant sympathy and admiration of all those enlightened persons who shared his opinions. In a twinkling he shot up, as it were, into the air like a rocket, and became popular, beyond his most sanguine expectations. The name of the first Church-rate martyr went the round of every paper in the United Kingdom ; and at length came out a lithographed likeness of him with his precious autograph appended, so—

"THOMAS TAG-RAO, CHURCH-RATE MARTYR."

Subscriptions were entered into on his behalf ; and as they were paid into his hands from time to time, he kept quietly increasing his purchases of linen-draperies and enlarging his business, in a decisive and highly satisfactory manner. Nothing could exceed the accounts brought in to the poor martyr of the extent to which his custom was increasing ; for in each window of his shop hung a copy of his portrait, attracting the eye of every passenger. But he was not the only person who rejoiced in this state of things ; there being others who had a deep stake in his success, and whom—forgetful of the maxim that one should begin nothing till one has well considered the end of it—he had not at first adverted to—viz. HIS ASSEES—to whom belonged, in point of law, the rattling business he was carrying on, and who were watching his movements with lively interest. He was suddenly struck dumb with dismay and astonishment, when he heard of this unexpected issue of the affair ; and began to fear that he had "missed his providential way." His assignees, however, seemed to think that they had got into *theirs*—and enlarged the premises, and greatly increased the stock, profiting by the continually augmenting popularity of Tag-rag.

From the moment of this dismal discovery, his ardour in the Great Cause wonderfully declined ; and he would have jumped at any decent excuse for getting out of the thing altogether. And, indeed, when he came

to think of it—where was the difficulty? He had fought a good fight; he had maintained a great principle; he had borne the heat and burden of the day!—But while the martyr was thus musing within himself, powerful forces were coming into the field to his succour, viz. the Society for the Promotion of Civil and Religious Discord; who, having caused all the proceedings against Tag-rag to be laid before an ambitious little crotchetty Barrister, he discovered a fatal flaw in them—viz. that in the *Significavit*, the word "Bishop" was spelled "*Bisop*," (*i. e.* without the "h.") The point was argued with prodigious pertinacity,* and incredible ingenuity, by four counsel on each side; each party vehemently declaring that if he failed, the laws of England would be shaken to their foundation: an intimation which, till they had had time to reflect upon it, not a little agitated the court. After great deliberation, however, the objection, "being in favour of liberty," was held to prevail; all the proceedings were quashed; and Mr Tag-rag was consequently declared entitled to his discharge!—On this he was invited to a grand tea-party by leading friends of the great principle, given in Hackney Fields, where, amidst a concourse of at least a hundred souls, including women and children, Tag-rag, inwardly shuddering at the thought, avowed himself ready to go again to the stake, "if Providence should require it." That seemed not, however, likely to be the case; for the churchwardens, having already had to pay some £1750 odd in the shape of costs, resolved never to meddle with him any more.

He succeeded in prevailing on his assignees to take him into the shop, in order to carry on the business upon their account, and as their servant—for which they allowed him two pounds a-week. Out of this, however, he was soon after compelled by the parish authorities to allow twelve shillings a-week to Mrs Tag-rag; and on her calling to ask for the first pay-

* See APPENDIX.

ment, he actually spit in the poor woman's face, before referring her, with an oath, to the parish authorities. Doctor Johnson used to say that *patriotism* was the last refuge of a scoundrel. Nowadays, however, it is *Church-rate Martyrdom*; and Tag-rag has had many imitators!

I must not conclude this part of my long history, without adverting to what befell the surviving partners of Mr Gammon, namely, Messrs Quirk and Snap.

The former had horrible misgivings as to the true cause of Mr Gammon's death—a strange inward persuasion that he had destroyed himself. When he heard of the event, suddenly, from the laundress, he was seized with a fit of trembling which lasted for several days. He dared not attend the funeral—or go to Mr Gammon's chambers, while his corpse lay there. Mr Snap, however, had younger and firmer nerves; and resolved to gratify his natural and considerate curiosity, by seeing "how Mr Gammon looked in his coffin." The day after the enlightened coroner's inquest had been held, therefore, he went to the chambers for that purpose, and was shown by the sobbing laundress into the silent and gloomy bedroom where the remains of Mr Gammon lay awaiting burial. The coffin lay on tressels near the window, which of course was darkened; and Mr Snap having taken off his hat, removed the coffin-lid and the face-cloth, and before him lay exposed the cold stern countenance of Mr Gammon. In spite of himself, Mr Snap trembled as he looked; and for a moment doubted whether, in gazing at the yellow effigy of him that was, he really beheld the late Mr Gammon; so fixed, so rigid, were the features—so contracted of their proportions, and disfigured by the close-fitting grave-cap. What determination was yet visible in the compressed lips! The once keen and searching eyes of Mr Gammon were now hid for ever beneath the heavy and clammy eyelids; and the ample brow was no longer furrowed by the workings of the ac-

tive and powerful spirit which had "jumped the world to come!" Mr Snap stared for several minutes in silence, and his heart beat a little quicker than usual.

"Oh, sir!" sobbed the laundress at length, as she, too, advanced to look again at the countenance of her deceased master, and from which she seldom took her eyes long together when alone—"he was the kindest and best of men! He was indeed!" Mr Snap said nothing, but presently took hold of the cold, thin, stiff fingers of Mr Gammon's right hand, squeezed them gently, and then replaced the hand in its former position.

"I hope he's happy, dear soul!" cried the laundress, gazing at his rigid countenance through her tears.

"Yes, of course he is—no doubt," replied Mr Snap in a somewhat lower tone of voice than he had spoken in before, and slowly returned to the sitting-room; whither the laundress followed him, as soon as she had replaced the face-cloth and coffin-lid.

"Got a drop of brandy in the room, Mrs Brown?" he inquired, and passed his hand across his face, which had grown very pale.

She gave him what he asked for; he drank it, and sighed.

"Devilish ugly look that cap gives him—eh, Mrs Brown? Hardly knew him."

"Ay, poor soul; but it don't much signify how the *face* looks if the heart's all right! He was always so kind to me; I shall never get another master like him!"

"Died *very* suddenly, Mrs Brown; didn't he?"

"Ay, he did, sir! His troubles broke his heart!"

"He'd quite enough of them to do so!" replied Snap significantly, and took his departure. He was one of the few who attended the funeral, and the day on which it took place was the gloomiest he had ever known.

Mr Gammon being gone, old Mr Quirk seemed to have quite lost the use of his head, and could attend to nothing. As for "the matters of the

affidavits," which he had been ordered by the Court of King's Bench to answer, it was impossible to do so, except by acknowledging the facts they stated to be true; and he was, in the ensuing term, struck off the roll of attorneys, and ceased to be any longer a "gentleman, one of the attorneys of our lord the king, before the king himself." In short, he was completely broken up. He was quickly compelled to part with Alibi House—in fact, with all his property; and narrowly escaped being thrown into a prison, there to end his days. During the last week of his stay at Alibi House, while all his effects were being sold, he was observed to sit down for hours together before a certain picture covered with black crape; and once or twice he lifted up the crape, and gazed with a horrid look at the object before him, as if he were meditating something mysterious and dismal. Nothing, however, happened. If he had ever wished to hang himself, he never could succeed in screwing his courage up to the sticking-place. He prevailed on a friend to buy in, for him, that particular picture; and it was almost the only article that he took with him to the small lodgings to which he removed with his daughter, on the sale of Alibi House. As for poor Miss Quirk, I pity her from my very heart: for though rather a weak girl, she was perfectly good-natured; and the reader will probably join in my indignation against Mr Toady Hug, when he hears that that gentleman, on seeing the unfortunate turn which affairs had taken with Miss Quirk, owing to no fault of hers, at the moment when he ought to have clung closest to the poor girl, deserted her, after having been engaged to be married to her ever since the period of her being disappointed of the affections of Mr Titmouse. It was, however, the business of the firm of Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, that he had desired to marry; and finding that it no longer existed, he considered himself, on legal principles, justified in rescinding the contract, on the ground of a failure of consideration. Snap, hear-

ing of this, instantly tendered his own "heart" in lieu of that of Mr Hug—and was accepted. He kept this quiet, till the fate of the action for a breach of promise of marriage, which he persuaded Miss Quirk to allow him to bring in her name against Mr Hug, should have been decided—as it soon was; for I should have mentioned, that no attempt had been made by any one to strike *Snap* off the rolls. He retained a Mr Heartbreak, a most eloquent counsel in such cases: and as Mr Toady Hug defended himself, in what he imagined to be a splendid speech, the jury immediately found a verdict against him of five hundred pounds—a little fortune for Miss Quirk, if Hug could have paid it. But the fact was, that he could not; and after a long negotiation between Snap and him, it was settled that there should be a sort of secret partnership between them; and that Hug should work out the damages by doing Mr Snap's business for a quarter only of the proper fees—the full fee, for appearance's sake among his brethren,

being marked on his brief. Shortly after this Snap got married, and took a little house in a street leading out of Saffron Hill, only two doors from the old office; and, as he had always auxiously cultivated the acquaintance of the leading thieves, he soon got into a respectable connection. A year afterwards, Mrs Snap made him the happy father of a quaint-looking little child; which, being a boy, his father, out of reverence for his deceased friend and partner, Mr Gammon, caused to be christened by the name of "*Oily*." Old Mr Quirk lingered on for about a couple of years longer, most inconveniently to Snap, when he died of a broken heart, and almost imbecile. As Snap assisted in depositing the revered remains of his father-in-law in St Andrew's churchyard, he could not help thinking within himself, what a *horrid* thing it would be, were the old gentleman to get up again, and come back and establish himself for another couple of years, in their little back-parlour!

CHAPTER VIII.

TRUE NOBILITY; YATTON ITSELF AGAIN; AND KATE AUBREY'S DISAPPEARANCE.

LET US now, however, turn to characters worthier of our notice, of our sympathy, and our fervent congratulations.

Two or three days after the assembling of the new parliament, Lord Drelincourt was introduced by two of his brother barons, one of them Lord De la Zouch, with the usual formalities, into the House of Lords. As he stood at the table while being sworn in, tranquil and dignified, there was such an expression of noble simplicity and goodness in his features, which had not even then entirely lost the

traces of anxiety and suffering, as touched me to the soul; and I fervently wished him health, and long life to enjoy his new honours. He looked quite commanding, in his ample ermine and scarlet robes; and having, with the pen tendered to him by the proper officer, inscribed on the roll the name "DRELINCOURT"—that of nearly the oldest barony in England, formally taken his seat on the barons' bench, and received the congratulations of his brother peers who came crowding around him—he stepped up to the woolsack, and grasped

with silent energy the hand of the new Lord Chancellor, Lord Wolstenholme ; who, composed and stately in his appearance and bearing, and apparently as familiar with his position as if he had occupied it for more years than days, welcomed the newly-introduced peer with infinite warmth and cordiality. This was Sir Charles Wolstenholme, the Attorney-general of a few short months before, and he to whose masterly ability and unwavering friendship Lord Drelincourt was mainly, if not indeed altogether, indebted under Providence for the position which he then occupied. They sat talking together for some time ; and the Chancellor happening to mention the ludicrous and yet intolerable pressure to which he was subject for everything he had to give away—particularly in the livings which fell to his disposal—instanced a small one in Devonshire of four hundred a-year, of which he had had notice only two hours before coming to the House, since which time he had had upwards of a dozen applications for it from so many peers then present ! “ Now, as a small *memento* of to-day, Drelincourt,” said he, with a smile, “ can you give me the name of any man who really wants, and in your judgment would suit, such a living ? ”

“ Oh, my dear Chancellor ! ” replied Lord Drelincourt, with eager delight, “ I know a man—an able, exemplary, starving friend of mine, Mr Neville—the Rev. Ralph Neville. He will do honour to your choice ! ”

“ Then ‘tis his,” replied the Chancellor; “ give me his name and address—my secretary shall write to him this very evening.”

Lord Drelincourt, overjoyed, wrote down Mr Neville’s name and address, and gave it to the Chancellor; and having reminded him that their dinner hour was seven precisely, the Chancellor having been for some time engaged to dinner with him on that day, Lord Drelincourt somewhat hastily quitted the House, resolved to be himself the first bearer to poor Mr Neville of the delightful intelligence of his promotion. His carriage, with Lady Drelin-

court and Miss Aubrey in it, (who had been present in the House during the introduction of Lord Drelincourt), had been standing for some time near the House, awaiting his return, in order to drive once or twice round the Park before dinner; but you may guess the kind of transport with which they heard him give directions for their being driven to St George’s in the East, and the object of his errand.

When Lord Drelincourt’s equipage, simple and elegant, the coronet painted on the panels being so small as not to *challenge* the observation of every passenger, drew up opposite the humble lodgings of Mr Neville, he and his little sick wife were sitting at tea, for which purpose he had a few minutes before propped her up on the sofa, on which she was obliged to recline during the greater part of each day. Prettily flustered were both of them, on seeing a stately equipage draw up, the steps let down, and hearing Lord Drelincourt, followed quickly by Lady Drelincourt and Miss Aubrey, (it was the first time that they had seen the former two except as Mr and Mrs Aubrey), knock at the door. Oh, excellent Lord Drelincourt ! how sweet was the office of communicating such news as that which you have so promptly brought to Mr and Mrs Neville ! He, on hearing it, turned immediately, silently, and as it were instinctively, to his pale suffering wife, with full eye and quivering lip—and no one present spoke for several moments. Well the fond husband knew that the true source of her frail health was their privation, and miserably straitened circumstances, and that the intelligence which they had just received, would, as it were, pour into a nearly broken heart the oil of gladness and of health. There was not the slightest change in the deportment of his distinguished visitors ; but his own was, in spite of all he could do to the contrary, consciously subdued, and a little embarrassed. What thankfulness was in his heart ! How was the great, barren, frowning world around him, suddenly turned into a smiling paradise ! No longer would they be unable to supply

their few and modest wants! No longer deny themselves the innocent enjoyments of life, and cheerful intercourse with society! Soon would he be in the independent exercise of the delightful duties of the pastoral office! And what a thoughtfulness of their humble interests, had been evinced by his noble friend in the first moments of his own excitement and triumph! To all parties, that was, indeed, an occasion of the outgoing of hearts towards each other; and Lord and Lady Drelincourt, before leaving, had insisted on seeing Mr Neville at dinner—poor Mrs Neville's health precluded their asking her—in Dover Street, before they left town, as they expected would shortly be the case.

I have already intimated that Lord Drelincourt had, that evening, a select dinner party; and there was a little incident connected with it, which will, I think, serve as another proof, were it necessary, of his considerate goodness. His guests consisted of the Lord Chancellor and Lady Wolstenholme, Lord and Lady De la Zouch, Mr Delamere, three or four other friends, Mr Runnington, and a Mr Staveley, a former fellow pupil of Lord Drelincourt's, and whom he had left still studying closely in the chambers of Mr Mansfield. Lord Drelincourt had always entertained a friendly feeling towards Mr Staveley, who was a young man of acute understanding, great industry, sound principle, and perfect frankness and simplicity of character. Mr Aubrey had from the first observed the depression of spirits to which his companion was subject, and which, in the course of their subsequent unreserved communications, he had discovered to be occasioned by the precariousness of his pecuniary circumstances, and the absence of all prospect, or apparent chance, of professional connection. It seemed that the relative by whose liberality alone he had been enabled to enter himself a student at Lincoln's Inn, and become a pupil of Mr Mansfield's, had died suddenly, leaving his nephew almost totally destitute. Was it not likely that such a person, thus situated, would excite the

yearning sympathies of his now ennobled fellow-student?

Indeed it was so; and the reason of Lord Drelincourt's asking him to dinner, on the present occasion, was, to give him a personal introduction to two individuals capable of being hereafter of vast service to any candidate possessed of industry, energy, and talent, for professional business and distinction—namely, Mr Runnington, as a solicitor of first-rate eminence, great personal respectability, and amiability of character—and the Lord Chancellor; with both of whom, as may easily be believed, Lord Drelincourt had much personal influence. Mr Staveley was the first guest that arrived, and he found Lord Drelincourt alone in the drawing-room. His lordship seized the opportunity of conversing with his friend, unrestrainedly, upon the topics above alluded to; and of assuring him that he might always rely on any good offices which it might be in his lordship's power to perform for him. He spoke to his desponding companion in a tone of earnest and inspiriting encouragement. "Come, come, my dear Staveley," said he, "*exporrige frontem!* It would seem to be the tendency of close and solitary legal study to make a man despair, and distrust the utility of his labours! But—go straight on!—Constancy, honour, industry, and talent, will inevitably clear the way for their possessor, and also in due time force him forward. Ah! believe me, I know what your feelings are; for very recently I shared them, but always endeavoured to master them. As for the want of a connection, I can only say that I knew but one attorney in all London—my own—a Mr Runnington, who dines with me to-day;—but had I known none, I should not have been disheartened, so long as I had health of body and mind, and the means of pursuing my studies"—Here Lord Drelincourt's quick ear caught a faint and half-suppressed sigh, uttered by his companion.—"I did my best while engaged in the study of the law, and am sure that I shall never have occasion to regret it; and I frank-

ly tell you, Staveley, I was as poor as a church-mouse, the whole time—over head and ears in debt; and, but for the kindness of this very Mr Runnington, who lent me three hundred pounds, I never could have entered Mr Mansfield's chambers, or formed your acquaintance."—While saying this, Lord Drelincourt was looking keenly at his companion.—"The law," continued his lordship, "is a noble profession! I should have become an enthusiast in it, had I continued to devote myself to its study and practice;—by the way, will you accept, as a little *memento* of our friendship, which I trust, Staveley, you will not permit to be broken off, my few law-books? Of course, I have no further occasion for those which relate to the more practical"—Here one of the doors opened, and Lady Drelincourt and Miss Aubrey—oh, you enchanting Kate!—entered, looking each exceedingly lovely, and receiving Mr Staveley with a charming cordiality and courtesy; for they had often heard Lord Drelincourt mention his name. The other guests made their appearance, in quick succession; and Lord Drelincourt made a point of introducing Mr Staveley, in flattering terms, to the Chancellor, who received him with great urbanity. 'Twas truly a delightful dinner party, and all were in high spirits. As for the Lord Chancellor, he took an opportunity, during the evening, of pressing on Lord Drelincourt the acceptance of an important office under the new government—one which they were exceedingly anxious to have satisfactorily filled, and to which would be annexed a seat in the cabinet!—Lord Drelincourt, however, firmly declined the brilliant offer, on the plea of the repose which he felt to be requisite, both for his family and himself, and also the attention due to his private affairs, to which it would be necessary to devote his personal superintendence for some time to come.

Soon after Mr Staveley had sat down to breakfast, the next morning, a servant of Lord Drelincourt's brought to his chambers a large parcel, consisting of the books of which his lordship

had begged his acceptance, over-night. With what peculiar interest did Mr Staveley glance over them, finding in every page slight pencil-marks, evidencing the careful reading of their former owner! In laying down the first volume which he had opened, something fell from it upon the floor, which, on his picking it up, proved to be a letter addressed to himself, in the handwriting of Lord Drelincourt, and marked "Private." On opening it, what were his feelings on seeing a draft for the sum of £300, which Lord Drelincourt entreated Mr Staveley to accept, as a loan, to be repaid whenever, and however, he might think fit; and in terms of earnest delicacy, reminding him of the circumstance which his lordship had named over-night—namely, his own acceptance of a similar sum from Mr Runnington. Mr Staveley coloured under a conflict of emotions, which subsided quickly into one strong and deep feeling of gratitude towards his truly noble, and generous friend; and that morning he wrote a letter, acknowledging, in fitting terms, the munificent act of Lord Drelincourt, and enclosing his note-of-hand for the amount; both of which, however, on his receiving them, Lord Drelincourt, with a good-natured smile, put into the fire, that there might exist no evidence whatever of the transaction between himself and Mr Staveley. His lordship did not even take Lady Drelincourt into his confidence in this matter.

At length every arrangement had been made in London, for their quitting it, and at Yatton, for their arrival. The last article of furniture, a magnificent piano for Lady Drelincourt, had gone down a fortnight before. Lord and Lady De la Zouch, together with Mr Delamere, had been at Fotheringham for some time; and the accounts which they gave in their letters, of the scene which might be expected on the memorable occasion of Lord Drelincourt's resuming possession of Yatton, threw them all into

a flutter of excitement. From Mr Delamere's accounts, it would seem as if the day of their return was to be a sort of jubilee. He himself had been to and fro twenty times between Yatton and Fotheringham; an entire unanimity of feeling existed, it seemed, with reference to all the leading arrangements, between himself, Mr Griffiths, Dr Tatham, Lord and Lady De la Zouch, and the Earl and Countess of Oldacre, whom it had been deemed expedient to take into their counsels upon the occasion; and a difficult negotiation concerning a certain fine military band, belonging to a regiment stationed *only* eleven miles off, had been brought to a satisfactory termination! Dr Tatham wrote letters to them, especially to Miss Aubrey, almost every day, and, in fact, they all began to imagine themselves already at Yatton, and in the midst of the delicate bustle that was going on there.

At length, the long-expected day for their setting off arrived—the 5th day of May 18—. About ten o'clock in the forenoon might have been seen standing, opposite Lord Drelincourt's door in Dover Street, two roomy travelling carriages and four. Several newly-engaged servants had gone down two or three days before, in charge of a large van full of luggage; and in the first carriage were going only Lord and Lady Drelincourt and Miss Aubrey, his lordship's valet and Lady Drelincourt's maid sitting in the rumble; while the second carriage was occupied by little Charles and Agnes, and their attendants, together with Harriet, Miss Aubrey's faithful and pretty little maid. Everything being at length ready, the word was given, crack went the whips! and away they rolled on their memorable and exciting journey. There was an evident air of expectation and interest along the road, for a long while before they approached Yatton; for in fact it was generally known that Lord Drelincourt, who, it was believed, had passed through a series of romantic adventures, was going down to take possession of the ancient fa-

mily estate in Yorkshire. How the hearts of the travellers yearned towards the dear old familiar objects on each side of the road, which, as they advanced at a rapid pace, they passed, with increasing frequency! At length they reached the last posting-house, within twelve miles of Yatton, and where there were manifest symptoms of preparation and stir. Eight fine horses were brought out in a twinkling, and the harness appeared new and gay. Mrs Spruce, the landlady, together with her two daughters, all dressed with unusual smartness, stood at the inn door, curtseying repeatedly. Lady Drelincourt and Kate beckoned them to the carriage door, and inquired after their health, with such a kindness and interest in their manner, as almost brought tears into their eyes.

"So you have not forgotten us, Mrs Spruce?" asked Lord Drelincourt with a gay smile, as they handed a glass of water into the carriage, at the request of Lady Drelincourt and Kate, who were evidently getting very nervous with their proximity to Yatton, and the exciting scenes which must there be awaiting them.

"Oh, my lord, forgotten your lordship! No, my ladies, not for one minute since the dismal day you all went—my lord! There's *such* a stir, my ladies, along the road—you'll see it all when you get a mile further on!—Of course your lordship and your ladyships know what's going to be done at the Hall"—

"Ah, ah! so I hear! Well—good-day, Mrs Spruce!" cried Lord Drelincourt, and the next moment they had dashed off, in their last stage, and at a thundering pace, to be sure. It was nearly twelve o'clock at noon; the day was bright and beautiful, and there was a fresh and exhilarating breeze stirring, which oft came laden with the rich scents of summer fields.

"Oh Agnes! oh Kate! what a contrast is this, to the day on which our horses' heads were last turned the other way!" exclaimed Lord Drelincourt; but received only a faint reply, for his companions were getting flurried and restless with the rapidly in-

creasing evidences of excitement on the road. As they advanced, they overtook vehicles of every description, all containing people in holiday trim, and all with their horses' heads turned one way—viz. towards the great centre of attraction, Yatton. At length the augmenting number of carriages, chaises, cars, gigs, vans, carts, waggons, many decked with ribbons, flowers, and laurel boughs, compelled them to slacken their speed, and afforded fuller opportunities of witnessing the enthusiasm with which their approach was greeted. Already they heard, or imagined they heard, from the direction of Yatton, the sounds of voices and music.

"I'm sure, Charles, I shall cry like a child"—quoth Kate, hereyessuddenly filling with tears; and such was the case also with Lady Drelincourt.

"And what, Kate, if you do?" cried her brother joyfully, kissing and embracing them affectionately.

"Charles! Charles! — I protest there's old Granny Grimston—it is indeed!" cried Kate eagerly, as they passed an old-fashioned market-cart, in which sat, sure enough, the good creature Miss Aubrey had mentioned, beside her daughter, to whom Kate waved her hand repeatedly—for the former had been an old pensioner of the late Mrs Aubrey's.

"Oh, what a sight burst upon them as soon as they had reached the turning of the road which brought them full in view of Yatton,—the village, and the Hall! They came, too, to a dead stand-still—'twas impossible to get on for some time, for they seemed to have got suddenly into the middle of a fair! What a shout rent the air! Boughs of laurel were waving in all directions, with wreaths and ribbons! Beautiful nosegays were flung in through the carriage-windows by girls, and even children, all dressed in their best and gayest attire! Here was formed an equestrian procession that was to precede them into Yatton, consisting of some hundred stout Yorkshire yeomen, chiefly tenants of Lord Drelincourt and his neighbours.

Louder and louder came the shouts of welcome from all quarters, before and behind, intermingled at length, as they entered the village, with the clash and clangour of cymbals, the rolling of drums, the sounds of trumpets, trombones, clarionets, and shrill inspiriting fifes. "Twas really most exciting; and Lady Drelincourt and Kate were already amply fulfilling their own predictions. Their carriage suddenly stopped for some moments; and a louder shout than had till then been heard, burst around them, while the military band approached playing "*Rule Britannia!*" followed by a procession of at least two hundred horsemen, headed by Delamere, and all wearing his bright blue election colours! He thrust his hand into the carriage, and grasping those of its inmates, again rode off. Here an attempt was made to take the horses out of Lord Drelincourt's carriage, which he peremptorily forbade; acknowledging, however, the affectionate enthusiasm which prompted the proposal, by repeatedly bowing in all directions as they passed down the village. Flags and branches of laurel hung from almost every window, and the crowd had become so great, as to prevent them, frequently, from moving on for more than a minute or two together. At length they saw the dear old church, with its long, thin, grey spire—no doubt its little bells were ringing as loudly as they could be rung, but they were not heard; for the band at that moment, when within a few yards of the park gates, struck up in fine style the inspiriting air of "*The King shall hae his ain again!*" A great number of carriages were drawn up on each side of the entrance to the park, and the high antique iron gates and stone pillars were covered with wreaths of flowers, and branches of laurel. Immediately within the gates, on each side, upon forms and stools, sat about a dozen of the oldest tenants on the estate, male and female, who, on the approach of Lord Drelincourt, lifted up their hands feebly and tremulously towards Heaven, while tears ran down their eyes,

and they implored a blessing on those who were re-entering their own, after so long and cruel a separation from it.

Here, however, the eager and affectionate eyes of the travellers lit upon an object infinitely more interesting and affecting than any they had yet seen—'twas the venerable figure of Dr Tatham; who, with his hat off, and his silvery hair glistening like a crown of righteousness, stood, his hand and face elevated reverently towards Heaven, imploring a blessing upon those who were approaching. Lord Drelin-court instantly called for the carriage-door to be opened, and, within a moment or two's time, he had grasped the little Doctor's hands in his own; and Lady Drelin-court and Kate, having also hastily alighted, had thrown their arms around him, and kissed him, with the feelings of two daughters towards a fond and venerated father. The little Doctor (who wore his new suit of black) was quite overcome, and could scarcely say a word—indeed they were all much excited. At this point came up Mr Delamere, who had dismounted at the gate, and placing Kate's arm hastily, and with a proud and triumphant air, within his own, while Lady Drelin-court was supported between her husband and Dr Tatham, the two children following, with their attendants, immediately behind—in this manner they approached the Hall, each side of the avenue lined with the gaily-dressed gentry of the neighbourhood, collected from far and wide. When they reached the fine old gateway, there shot up suddenly into the air, upon a flag-staff planted upon the centre of the turret, a splendid crimson banner, while the regimental band within the court-yard, struck up the spirit-stirring air, one which no Englishman can listen to without emotion—"See the conquering hero comes!" The moment that they had passed under the gateway, what a gay and brilliant scene presented itself! Upon the steps fronting the door, and indeed all around, stood the most distinguished persons in the country, ready to greet the new-comers.

There was the Lord-Lieutenant, the High Sheriff, two of the county Members—Catholics and Protestants—high Tories and high Whigs—there they were—the high-born, the beautiful—the gifted, the good—all crowding with eager and enthusiastic welcome, around those who were thus returning to their own, after so extraordinary and infamous an exclusion and banishment. To Lady Drelin-court, to Miss Aubrey, to Lord Drelin-court himself, amidst the overpowering excitement of the moment, it appeared as though they had fallen into a vivid and dazzling dream, on the outskirts of which they had been hovering for months; and they felt completely confused and bewildered. Lady De la Zouch, and one or two others of their considerate friends, observing the painful emotions with which Lady Drelin-court and Miss Aubrey were ineffectually contending, succeeded in withdrawing them, for a while, from the tumultuous scene, into their respective chambers.

A splendid cold collation was spread in the hall, for the immediate friends and guests of Lord Drelin-court, while an immense entertainment, of a more substantial description, was prepared under an awning, upon the beautiful terrace at the back of the Hall, for about three hundred people, consisting principally of the tenantry, their families and friends, while half-a-dozen feasts were going on in the village, for those who were necessarily, from want of room, excluded from the terrace tables. The substantial business of the day, viz. feasting, was to commence, both for gentle and simple, at three o'clock; shortly before which period Lady Drelin-court and Miss Aubrey appeared in the drawing-room, and then in the hall, infinitely the better for their refreshing toilets. 'Tis true that their eyes looked somewhat impaired by the excessive emotions occasioned by the events of the day—for they had both been several times, during their brief absence, on the verge of hysterics; yet for all that, they looked a pair of as lovely women as dear Old England, rich in beauty as it is,

could produce. They both wore plain white muslin dresses, with small blue rosettes, which Lady De la Zouch had intimated would give a certain person infinite gratification, meaning the new member for the borough; for his colours were blue, whereof there was a modest glimpse in his own surtout. Lord Drelincourt also appeared greatly the better for his visit to his dressing-room, and was in the highest possible spirits—as well he might be, amidst a scene so glorious and triumphant as that around him; all people, high and low, rich and poor, without distinction of party or creed, vying with one another in doing him honour, and welcoming him back to the halls of his ancestors.

At length, it being announced that all was in readiness, before sitting down to their own banquet, Lord Drelincourt, with Lady Drelincourt on one arm, and his sister on the other, and followed by Dr Tatham, Mr Runnington, and almost all his guests, passed along under the old archway that led over the bridge to the terrace, in order that the Doctor might say grace before the feast began: and the instant that Lord and Lady Drelincourt and Miss Aubrey made their appearance, the shouting, clapping of hands, and waving of handkerchiefs, and tossing up of hats that ensued, defies description, completely overpowering Lady Drelincourt and Kate, and somewhat disturbing the equanimity of Lord Drelincourt himself. 'Twas several minutes before the least cessation occurred. At length, however, Mr Griffiths, the steward, who was to preside on the occasion, succeeded in directing attention to Dr Tatham, who stood uncovered ready to say grace, which he did as soon as there was a decent approach to silence; he and those who had accompanied him, then returning to the Hall. What a prodigious onslaught was instantly made on the enormous masses of beef, boiled and roast—the hams, the tongues, the fowls—and all the innumerable other good things which were heaped upon those hospitable tables! There was ale *ad libitum*; and, in addition to that, a bottle

of port and of sherry to each mess of four; which latter luxuries, however, were generally reserved for the business which was to take place after the substantial part of the feast had been discussed.

According to a previous arrangement, about four o'clock intimation was given to the vast party upon the terrace, that Lord Drelincourt, accompanied by his guests, would come and take their seats for a short time at the head of the tables, his lordship occupying the place of Mr Griffiths. After a great bustle the requisite space was obtained at the head of the nearest table; and presently Dr Tatham led in Lady Drelincourt, and Mr Delamere, Kate; followed by Lord Drelincourt and all his visitors—their arrival being greeted in the same enthusiastic manner as before. After they had selected their places, but before they had sat down, Dr Tatham returned thanks amidst a sudden and decorous silence; and then all, having resumed their seats, had an opportunity of feasting their eager and fond eyes with the sight of those who had been so cruelly torn from them, and so long estranged. Lord Drelincourt sat at the head of the table, with Lady Drelincourt on one side, and his sister upon the other, both looking exceedingly animated and beautiful. Beside Kate sat Mr Delamere, his eyes greedily watching her every look and motion; and beside Lady Drelincourt sat the venerable Dr Tatham, looking perfectly and unspeakably happy. After sitting for some minutes conversing with those immediately around him, during which time expectation had gradually hushed down the noise which had prevailed on their entering, Lord Drelincourt slowly poured out a glass of wine, his hand slightly trembling; and while Lady Drelincourt and Kate leaned down their heads, and hid their faces, he slowly rose, amidst respectful and anxious silence. His voice was at all times clear and melodious, his enunciation distinct and deliberate: so that every word he uttered, could be heard by all present. There were grace and dignity in his countenance and ges-

tures ; and you felt, as you looked and listened to him, that he uttered, was from his heart. Thus he spoke :—

" Oh, my friends ! what a happy moment is this to me, and to mine ! What thanks do I not owe to God, for his great goodness, in bringing us again together, in our former relations of mutual and uninterrupted respect and affection ! You must not, however, expect me to say much now, for I cannot, because my heart is so full of love and respect to those whom I see around me, and of gratitude to God. May He, my dear friends, who is now beholding us, and marking the thoughts of our hearts, bless and preserve you all, and enable me never to give you cause to regret having thus affectionately welcomed me back again to my home ! It pleased Him, my friends, that I, and those whom you see near me, and whom I so tenderly love, should be torn away suddenly, and for a long time, from all that our hearts held dear. The pangs it cost us—bear with me, my friends—the pangs it cost us"—here Lord Drelincourt was obliged to pause for some moments. " We have, since we left you all, gone through much affliction ; a little privation ; and some persecution. It was all, however, God's ordering ; and we have besought Him that we might at all times feel and know it to be so, in order that we might never be impatient or rebellious. Ah, my friends ! He is wiser and kinder in His dealings with us, than we are often able to see ; and as for myself, I think I can truly say, that I would not have lost the lessons which my recent sufferings have taught me, for a thousand times my present advantages.

" What has befallen us has satisfied me, and I hope you too, of the slight hold we have of those advantages of which we consider ourselves surest. Who can tell, dear friends, what a day or an hour, may bring forth ? And I hope I have also learned one of the great lessons of life, better than I knew it before—that cheerful resignation to the will of God, is the only source of fortitude ! God loves the voice of praise which he hears *from the desert !*

Never, dear friends, when we are in our deepest difficulties and troubles—never, NEVER let us despair ! Thank God, I never did, or you would not perhaps have seen me here to-day. God overrules everything for the real good of those who faithfully obey him : and in our own case, I can assure you, that the very things which we looked upon as the cruellest and hardest to bear of all that had happened to us, turned out to be the very means by which we have been restored to the happiness which we are now met to celebrate ! See, then, how good God has been to us ! When I look around me, and see what I am permitted to enjoy, and know what I *deserve*, I tremble.

" You all know, of course, that it has pleased God to place us a little higher, in point of mere worldly station, than we were before ; but I think you will find that it has made only this difference in us : namely, that we are more sensible of the importance of the duties which we have to perform. 'Tis not, dear friends, I deeply feel, the mere coronet, which confers true distinction, but how it is worn. I, of course, have only succeeded by birth, and apparently by accident, to that mark of distinction which the merit of some other person had won for him long ago. I trust I shall wear it with honour and humility, and that so"—he paused for a moment—" will my son, after me.

" And now, my dear friends, I must conclude. You see how much those who are sitting near me, are affected." Lord Drelincourt glanced fondly but hastily at Lady Drelincourt and his sister, paused for some time, and then in a lower tone resumed. " You may remember, some of you at least, the evening before we left Yatton ; what you then said to me"—here again he paused, and for some time. " I have never forgotten that evening ; the thought of it has often been like balm poured into a broken heart.

" I have heard that since I left you all, things have gone very differently from the way they went in my time. Oh, dear friends, there shall be no

more extortion — there shall be no more oppression, at Yatton ! I can, I think, answer for myself ; and I think my little son will not take after his father if—you shall see my children presently—God bless you, dear friends ! You see that I have now and then been overcome while speaking ; I know you will bear with me. Were you in my place, and to look upon those whom I now look upon, and to recollect what I recollect, you also would be overcome. But let our tears now pass away ! Rejoice, dear friends, for it is a day of rejoicing ! Be merry ! be happy ! I now from my heart drink—we all drink—all your healths ! Here are health, and peace, and prosperity to you all, dear friends ! God bless you all !—God bless you all !”

Lord Drelincourt raised his glass to his lips, and drank off the wine it contained, his hand visibly trembling the while. He then sat down, evidently much subdued ; and as for Lady Drelincourt, Miss Aubrey, and Lady De la Zouch, nay, everybody present, they were deeply affected by the simple and affectionate address that had fallen from Lord Drelincourt ; which was followed by a long silence, infinitely more expressive than the most vociferous responses. After a while, the band commenced playing exquisitely,

“ Should auld acquaintance be forgot.”

There were heard several attempts, from time to time, from different quarters, to join in the chorus, but they were faint and subdued ; and Lord Drelincourt perceiving the true state of the case, suddenly covered his face with his hands, and appeared for some moments powerfully affected. Then—the song over—affectionately taking the hands of Kate and Lady Drelincourt, he fondly whispered, that all their past sufferings were surely that day richly recompensed ; and fearing lest his presence, and that of his distinguished guests, might be a check upon the freedom and hilarity of the great company before him, he rose, and bowing courteously to all around, and followed by those who

had accompanied him, withdrew amidst vehement cheering. A few minutes afterwards, according to Lord Drelincourt’s promise, little Charles and Agnes were led in amidst a thousand exclamations of fondness and admiration, (they were really very beautiful children) ; and having had a little drop of wine poured into each of their cups, they drank timidly, as they were told, to the health of all present, and then skipped hastily back whence they had come.

The day but one afterwards was Sunday ; and the little church of Yatton was very full. Dr Tatham got through the Prayers pretty firmly, but any one might have observed his eye often attracted, as it were, irresistibly, to the pew which he had so long been accustomed to see empty, but which was now filled again with its former fondly-loved occupants. When he ascended the pulpit, he gave out, as his text, the twenty-third Psalm ; his voice faltering more and more as he proceeded.

“ The Lord is my shepherd ; I shall not want.

“ He maketh me to lie down in green pastures : he leadeth me beside the still waters.

“ He restoreth my soul : he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness, for his name’s sake.

“ Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil : for thou art with me : thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.

“ Thou preparest a table before me, in the presence of mine enemies : thou anointest my head with oil ; my cup runneth over.

“ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life ; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.”

‘Twas plain that this Doctor would never be able to read the little sermon he had prepared, for he was himself overcome, and saw almost every one

around him in tears. So after a few moments' pause, with a fatherly but tremulous solemnity, he pronounced the sublime benediction ; after which his congregation slowly withdrew, in moving silence.

I shall not detain the reader, with whom I am very loath to part, with the description which I had prepared of the opening of Kate's school. A prettier one there is not in England ; and if anything could have increased Kate's love for him who had taken such pains to please her in the matter, it was Dr Tatham's informing her, a morning or two afterwards, that Mr Delamere had endowed her school with fifty pounds a-year for ever. In proportion to Kate's sorrow on leaving her school, upon the occasion of their all being driven from Yatton, it may easily be believed, were her delight and gratitude, for this its complete and more efficient restoration. The opening of it by Dr Tatham, in her presence, and also in that of Mr Delamere, was doubtless an interesting ceremony, yet not to be compared, perhaps, with one that occurred a short month afterwards at Yatton, and in which the same three persons were principally concerned !

— Here is a heavenly morning in June ! and Kate lying trembling and with beating heart, alone, in that old-fashioned chamber of hers, in which she was first seen by the reader, or where he at least obtained a faint and dim vision of her. 'Tis very early, certainly ; and as Kate hath passed a strange, restless night, she is at length closing her eyes in sleep. Nothing is to be heard stirring, save yonder lark, that is carrying his song higher and higher out of hearing every moment ; so she will sleep, for a while, undisturbed.

* * * *

— But now, rise, Kate ! rise ! It is your wedding morning ! Early though it be, here are your fair bridesmaids seeking admittance, to deck you in your bridal robes ! Sweet Kate, why

turn so pale, and tremble so violently ? It is, truly, a memorable day, one long looked forward to with a fluttering heart — a day of delicious agitation and embarrassment ; but courage, Kate ! courage ! Cannot these three beautiful girls, who, like the Graces, are arraying you, as becomes your loveliness, with all their innocent arts and archness, provoke one smile on your pale cheek ? Weep, then, sweet Kate, if such be your humour ; for it is the overflowing of joy, and will relieve your heart ! — But hasten ! hasten ! your lover is below, impatient to clasp you in his arms ! The maids of the village have been up with the sun, gathering sweet flowers to scatter on your way to the altar ! Hark, how merrily ! merrily ! ring the bells of Yatton church ! Nearer and nearer comes the hour which cannot be delayed ; and why, blushing and trembling maiden, should you dread its approach ? Hark ! carriage after carriage is coming, crashing up to the Hall ! Now your maidens are placing on your beautiful brow the orange blossoms — mysterious emblems !

"The fruits of autumn, and the flowers of spring,"

and a long, flowing, graceful veil shall conceal your blushes ! — Now, at length she descends, and sinks into the arms of a fond and noble brother, whose heart is too full for speech, as is that of her sister ! Shrink not, my beauteous Kate, from your lover, who approaches you, see, how tenderly and delicately ! Is he not one of whom a maiden may be proud ? See the troops of loving friends waiting to attend you, and do you honour ! Everywhere that the eye looks, are glistening gay wedding-favours, emblems of innocence and joy. Come, Kate — your brother waits ; you go with him to church, but you will come back with ANOTHER ! He who loves you as a father, the venerable minister of God, is awaiting your arrival ! What a brilliant throng is in that little church !

— Now her beautiful form is standing at the altar, beside her

manly lover, and the solemn ceremony has commenced, which is to unite, with Heaven's awful sanction, these two young, and happy, and virtuous hearts!

"Tis done! Kate Aubrey! Kate Aubrey! O sweet Kate! where are you! She is no more—hnt, as Mrs Delamere, is sitting blushing and sobbing beside her husband, he elate with pride and fondness, as they drive rapidly back to the Hall. In vain

quiet, as it shrinks also timidly from the glittering array of guests, seated around it, and she soon retires, with her maidens, to prepare for her agitating journey!

— Well, they are gone! Our pure and lovely Kate is gone! 'Tis hard to part with you! But blessings attend you! Blessings attend you both! You cannot forget dear YATTON, where all that is virtuous and noble, will ever with open arms receive you!

THE AUTHOR'S ADIEU TO HIS READER.

AND NOW, DEAR FRIENDS! FAREWELL FOR MANY A DAY!
IF E'ER WE MEET AGAIN, I CANNOT SAY.
TOGETHER HAVE WE TRAVELL'D TWO LONG YEARS,*
AND MINGLED SOMETIMES SMILES, AND SOMETIMES TEARS!
NOW DROOPS MY WEARY HAND, AND SWELLS MY HEART,—
I FEAR, GOOD FRIENDS! WE MUST FOR EVER PART.
FORGIVE MY MANY FAULTS! AND SAY OF ME,
HE HATH MEANT WELL, THAT WRIT THIS HISTORY.

* This alludes to the period of the successive appearance of *Ten Thousand A-Year* in that distinguished periodical, *Blackwood's Magazine*: the first chapter in the Number for October 1839, and the last, in August 1841.

NOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS TO VOL. II.

(I.)—PAGE 2, col. 2.

WHAT IS MAYHEM?

The offence of mayhem (whence the modern term ‘*maim*’) consists of the violently depriving another of the use of such of his members as may render him the less able, in fighting, either to defend himself, or annoy his adversary. By the ancient common law, he who maimed another was sentenced to lose the like part—*membrum pro membro*. (3d Instit. 118). Nowadays, mayhem may become the subject of civil or criminal proceedings, according to circumstances—chiefly with respect to the degree and extent of violence and injury, or the intention of the assailant. In the case in the text, Mr Yahoo had suffered *mayhem*, by reason of the loss of his fore teeth! Mr Gammon’s insidious recommendation to that gentleman to bring an action, in which he would be nonsuited for want of a witness, would now have no force.—See *ante*, vol. i., Notes and Illustrations, No. III. p. 375.

(II.)—PAGE 2, col. 2.

ARREST ON MESNE PROCESS.

In the year 1838, arrest on mesne process was—subject to the single exception of a debtor’s being about to quit the country, in which case, even, a judge’s order would be necessary—abolished, “as unnecessarily extensive and severe.”—Stat. 1 & 2 Vict. c. 110, §1.

(III.)—PAGE 88, cols. 1, 2.

WITNESSES IN AN ACTION OF BREACH OF PROMISE OF MARRIAGE.

It has been already explained that by a recent statute, the parties to an ac-

tion are themselves now competent and compellable to give evidence:—but one of the few exceptions is, (§ 4) “any action for breach of promise of marriage.” In the contemplated action, therefore, of *Miss Quirk v. Titmouse*, neither she nor he could have entered the witness-box, to amuse the audience.

(IV.)—PAGE 112, col. 1.
THE “MAN IN THE MOON.”

The description of the Yatton election has excited no little interest, both in this country, in America, and on the Continent, especially in France. It formed the subject of a political paper in one of the leading journals at Paris. It might almost be imagined that the scenes described in this volume had been present to the minds of those concerned in many elections which occurred subsequently to the appearance of *Ten Thousand A-Year*. In the Aylesbury election, A.D. 1850, for instance, a mysterious briber made his appearance under the name of “The Man in the Moon!”—Printed Minutes, 28th April, 1851, p. 15. Aylesbury Petition.

(V.)—PAGE 146, cols. 1, 2.
ELECTION COMMITTEES.

The constitution of an election committee has been altogether altered, and much improved, since the period at which the text points. Down to the year 1848, the Legislature had repeatedly remodelled that tribunal, as experience developed its faulty construction. In that year was passed statute 11 & 12 Vict. c. 18, entitled, “The Election Petitions Act, 1848,” which is the one now [A.D. 1854] in force. A succinct his-

tory of these changes, and a full account of the existing system [A.D. 1854] may be seen in the fourteenth chapter of the Author's *Manual of Parliamentary Election Law*, pp. 271, *et seq.* There are many persons of sagacity and parliamentary experience, however, who advocate a still more decisive change—the transfer of this species of jurisdiction to a judicial tribunal, distinct from and independent of the House of Commons—swayed by none of its party influences, and capable, by legal knowledge and experience, of conducting such inquiries on fixed principles of legal investigation. The scenes described in the text as having occurred in a Parliamentary Election Committee room, fade into insignificance before those which have been repeatedly exhibited since this work was written.

(VI.)—PAGE 168, col. 2.

JOINT-STOCK COMPANIES.

Shortly after the publication of this part of *Ten Thousand A-Year*, a sort of mercantile madness did, indeed, fall on the people of England. Scarcely any scheme could be propounded, however absurd, which did not meet with eager welcome amongst all classes of society. When bubble after bubble had burst, in the way described in the text, the Legislature was forced to interfere, and enacted a salutary code of regulations [A.D. 1844, *et seq.*], which have placed Joint-Stock Companies, with reference alike to their members and the public, on a safe and intelligible basis. The legal liabilities attaching to persons in the position in which the Earl of Dredlington is represented, formed the subject of singularly conflicting decisions, with ruinous effects in the courts for several years: but the law is now [1854] satisfactorily settled.

(VII.)—PAGE 214, cols. 1, 2.

MESSRS QUIRK, GAMMON, AND SNAP'S ARREST OF MR AUSREY, ON MESNE PROCESS.

See Note II. tit. "Mesne Process."

(VIII.)—PAGE 237, col. 1.

FORGERY.

The offence of Forgery ceased to be capitally punishable on the 1st October, 1837, stat. 7 Will. 4, & 1 Vict. c. 84, §§ 1, 5.

(IX.)—PAGE 245, col. 2.

LADY STRATTON'S INTESTACY.

This was a case of real *intestacy*; inasmuch as the facts show that Lady Stratton (*ante*, p. 208, col. 2) had contemplated a change in the destination of her property, indicated in her previous instructions to Mr Parkinson. She had asked for "her will"—meaning the instrument she intended to become such; but she had never seen, or heard read over to her, and much less signed, the document which he had drawn up in supposed conformity with her original oral instructions; and when it was placed before her, she used the expression, "*only a few words*," indicating an intention of adding to, or varying a former purpose. In addition to this, she had talked to Mr Parkinson, shortly before her death (p. 245), of dividing the amount—and that without specifying the proportion—of the policy between Kate Aubrey and her brother. Mr Gammon was therefore right in saying that Mr Parkinson's draft "did not contain her *last will and testament*." At the period referred to in the story, the law did not require a will of mere personalty to be signed by the testator. However, on and since the 1st January 1838, it has been otherwise—two witnesses, moreover, being requisite equally in the case of realty and personalty. The testator's signature, however, may be either his own, or that of some other person, in his presence, and by his direction; but in either case, in the simultaneous presence of at least two attesting witnesses.—Stat. 1 Vict. c. 26.

(X.)—PAGE 254, col. 1.

THE EARL OF DREDDLINGTON'S JOINT-STOCK-COMPANY LIABILITIES.

See Note VI. tit. "Joint-Stock Companies."

(XI.)—PAGE 306, col. 2.

MR TITMOUSE'S PEDIGREE.

Whether there was originally any 'screw loose' in Mr Titmouse's pedigree is a question which must be left to the astute and accomplished legal reader. It is here neither asserted, nor denied, that such was the case: nevertheless, it may be worth while, for one curiously inclined, to combine the various statements respecting the pedigree, to be found in the story.

(XII.)—PAGE 316, col. 1.

PRIVILEGE OF PARLIAMENT.

The privilege of a member of the House of Commons from arrest, exists for forty days before, and forty days after, a meeting of Parliament; and the rule is alike, in the case of a dissolution and a prorogation. This was expressly determined in the year 1847, by the Court of Exchequer, in the case of *Goudy v. Duncombe, M.P.*, 1st Exchequer Rep. 430. There the dissolution of Parliament had occurred on the 23d July—the new writs being returnable on the 21st September; but on the 13th August the meeting of Parliament was prorogued to the 12th October. Mr Duncombe had been elected for the borough of Finsbury on the 28th July, and arrested on the 2d September. A judge discharged him on the 7th September on the ground of privilege; and the Court of Exchequer, after taking time to consider the matter, decided that Mr Duncombe had been rightly discharged.—It will be noted (*post. p. 346, col. 2*) that this rule was observed with great exactness in the case of Mr Titmouse!

(XIII.)—PAGE 343, col. 2.

FRANKING LETTERS BY MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT.

This privilege was abolished in the year 1840, when a new system of postage was adopted, under stat. 3 & 4 Vict. c. 96. See § 56.

(XIV.)—PAGE 350, col. 1.

A BANKRUPT'S CERTIFICATE.

The right of granting and withholding a certificate to a bankrupt, no longer rests with his creditors, who might be easily influenced by undue motives, but is vested in the judge in bankruptcy, who has become acquainted with the applicant's whole conduct and doings. He may, sitting publicly in court, grant, refuse, or postpone a certificate, or annex such conditions to a certificate, as he may think fitting. This salutary change in the law was originally effected on the 12th August, 1842, by statute 5 & 6 Vict. c. 122, § 39; and was re-enacted, with improvements, in the year 1849, by statute 12 & 13 Vict. c. 106, §§ 198-207.

CONCLUSION

OF

TEN THOUSAND A-YEAR.

